That Wicked and Needy Type of Love
by RenTenTen

Summary

When Gemma left the realms that last time, she thought that she was through with magic. However, finding out that she's been gifted, or cursed, with immortality gives a whole new perspective to things. Her epic love is a tree, her friends are long gone, and the only thing that has any appeal to her is wandering around searching for adventure. And Mystic Falls is her new adventure.

Notes

This work is a super shout out to EvanescentOrchid on Fanfiction, who wrote "Evanescent Temptation". If you're a fan of this genre, then you've probably already read it. It was awesome, was it not? Anyway, that story inspired me to write my own about Gemma mixed up with some vamps. However, as much I love Twilight, I just can't pair her with any of the guys from there. Sorry, I just don't have it in me. So instead, you'll just have to enjoy some Demma action (Damon/Gemma, I thought Gamon sounded too much like a Digimon or something. LOL) I do not have a beta, all mistakes are my own. If you want to be my beta, hit me up.

Disclaimer: I don't own any of the recognizable characters, settings, or situations. I do however, own the characters reactions to the situations that I put them in.

BTW, if anyone seems OOC, they are. It's an AU, everyone is OOC. Silly geese!
That Elusive Thing Called Death

When I met the Three on the foggy barge those many years ago, I didn't know that this is what they meant.

I should have realized it when they said we wouldn't meet again. They were the Three that took everyone to the other side after death. And like a fool I had given away my final choice of death. It wasn't until after my twenty-fifth birthday that I started to get a sense that something wasn't right. I had gone to America after graduating from Spence, I was going to start fresh. I graduated from university and became a secretary for a lawyer. It was while I was on a lunch with some of the other ladies from the office when it was brought to my attention.

"Gemma," started Addie, she was born in the States and she had a strange accent, she was from Boston, "you must tell us how you manage to stay looking so young. What are you, twenty-five? And not a wrinkle in sight." Americans were very blunt, it took me a bit to get used to their inquisitiveness. In Britain, you didn't ask questions, you spoke about the weather just to be polite. But, I truly didn't have anything to tell her. I shrugged and said,

"My mother always looked younger than her age. I must have gotten it from her."

Three years later and I still looked the same. The same as I looked as a twenty-two year old. I felt as if it must have had something to do with the realms. I had not returned since that last time at Spence, so it couldn't have been a result of the magic that resided there. And there couldn't have been any magic left in me, because I had bound it equally to the lands. Both Ann and Felicity were just as involved in the realms as I was, but through the letters and pictures we had sent over the years, I could see them aging. Though slight, it was there. But for me, nothing had changed after a certain point in time.

I was at a loss for what could be causing my seemingly everlasting youth, and there was only one group of beings that could possibly answer my questions. So sitting alone in my apartment one evening after work, I gathered my courage to call the door of light.

I was afraid that it wouldn't work. I hadn't tried anything realms-related for eleven years. But I think I was even more afraid that it would work. I told the creatures of the realms that I would be back. To help them find a balance, and to mediate between the tribes. If this did work, all I could hope was that time passed differently there than it had for me, and that they hadn't missed my presence too much.

And it was not only the creatures of the realms that I was worried about seeing again.

Kartik was there, as he would be forever. While he assumed that we would meet, and be together again, how could that be? Especially since he was tethered to the Tree of All Souls for seemingly the rest of the realms' existence, and I wasn't even aging properly enough to expect death at this point. After the first couple years of our separation, I would have dreams of him, of us, in the realms. Dreams of love and possibilities. But sooner than later, those dreams dwindled, fizzled out
to nothing, and I was left with the harsh realities that I find myself in now.

I called for the door. Nothing happened. I called again, focusing on the memories of old Gemma, Felicity, Ann, and Pippa, when we would call it after sneaking out of Spence and into that cave in the woods. And the lights flickered out. A breeze made my spine tingle. And when I opened my eyes, the door was there. And I grabbed the knob and turned it, stepping to the other side.

When I stepped out, I was in the Garden. A great wave of nostalgia passed over me. This was where I saw my pseudo-mother for the first time after her death, where the other girls and I would frolic and play. It looked the same. It looked beautiful. It was perfect. And I could feel the power I was used to feeling inside me thrum in the air. But it was quiet, and the silence made me wary. I was hoping to see some of my old allies here, just waiting for me. But I knew that was a wish if there ever was one. I started walking towards the river. If there was one person who I'd want to see most right now it would be Gorgon.

As I made my way to the river, I became aware of a rustling in the bushes. There was someone or something watching me, and here I was, all alone and unarmed. I hoped that whatever it was, it was just curious, because I was out of shape and practice when it came to fighting for my life. I finally made it to the river, and I found what I was looking for. Gorgon's boat was quite a ways away from shore, but I waved, and it seems she or one of the many snakes nestled upon her crown was aware of me, for she began steering in my direction.

Whoever that was watching, had left by now. And I felt safer the closer Gorgon came. At last, her boat drifted next to me, and she let the side down for me to board.

"Most High," she rasped. "You have returned." She didn't turn to look at me, which I was grateful for since in her unbound state her turn-you-to-stone eyes were active. Been there, done that.

"I have." I smiled. "It's really good to see you, Gorgon." I paused for a beat. "I do have a question though."

"Hm?" She asked, steering toward an unknown destination.

"I asked you before, why you called me Most High. Back then, you said it was because I was the most powerful priestess, the highest rank. But now, why do you still call me it? I have no more powers, I bound it all to be divided between the realms."

"Perhaps it is true that you bound power to the realms. But I do not lie. If you had none of your own, how is it that you are here?" She had a point. I needed to have some sort of magic to enter the realms. And it was true that the first time I called the door of light, I had never entered the realms before. This was all just very confusing for me.

"Where are we going, Gorgon?"

"The Winterlands." She replied.

"For what reason?" I asked.

"I assumed that you would like to visit." She was right of course. I had grown older, but Gorgon was still 'Most Wise'. I sat back for the rest of the ride. My eyes taking in the changes that had
occurred while I was away. We reached the Winterlands after a time, and the changes here were most drastic. For one, we didn't have to hide upon our entrance, the previously dead grass was completely rejuvenated, and even the trees were trying to turn over a new leaf. The silence of everything was still disconcerting. When we had gone as far as we could go by boat, Gorgon let down the plank.

"Thank you Gorgon. I'll be back shortly. I... just have to say goodbye."

"I will be here," replied Gorgon. I knew the way well, even if I hadn't been here for years and the reason for visit was much different. When I made it, all I could do was sit at the base of the tree that captured and entombed my Kartik. Wendy had once told me that when the wind blew through the leaves she would hear the most beautiful sounds. Experiencing it for the first time myself, I was inclined to agree. It sounded like my name. Gem-ma, Gem-ma. It was him whispering my name.

I stood after a while and placed my palms and forehead on the bark, trying to get as close to Kartik as I could.

"Kartik. I know it has been quite a while. But I'm here now. And I'm here to say I love you. I will always love you, but I don't think we'll ever be together. I'll never forget you, and I probably will never move on, but it is time for me to say goodbye." I pat the trunk one last time before turning away, brushing off the traitorous tears that I didn't wish to fall. I swear as I was walking away I could hear him say 'I love you'.

Reaching the boat, I climbed aboard. "Gorgon, if it isn't too much trouble, could you take me to see Philon?"

"As you wish," was her apathetic response. We arrived swiftly, and no more words passed between us. When we reached the edge of the forest, I was surprised to see Gorgon joining me on the ground. "Follow, Most High." We walked swiftly through the forest, and again, I felt like someone was watching me, possibly the same something from the garden. I chose to ignore it and hope that it wasn't a threat. Arriving to a clearing, I was surprised to see a few Hajin around. When I had left all those years ago, there was still a vast amount of animosity between the opposing creatures. Gorgon led me to a large tent that I remembered was Philon's and opened the flap, gesturing for me to go in. I did without hesitation, and she followed. Adjusting my eyes to the darker interior took me a few moments, and the first figures I saw were Philon and Asha.

"It's so good to see both of you." I curtsied, I was in the presence of the leaders of the Forest People and the Hajin, respectively.

"Priestess." Philon greeted.

"Lady Hope." Asha smiled.

"It's been a while." Said Philon. "I was thinking that you'd never come back." The way he said it, I couldn't be sure if he was disappointed or not. I chose not to care.
"Yes. I had some...issues...I had to work out for myself. You've done a remarkable job rebuilding here. Everything looks the same, if not better."

"It just shows that working together we can accomplish the most impossible of things." Chimed the soft-spoken Hajin leader.

"It seems as if you want something, Priestess. Out with it." I wasn't sure how to phrase my question. "If you're worried about our bargain, while the way you went about dividing the magic wasn't ideal, the outcome was... favorable." Good. I had been worried about that. Philon had given me those silver arrows and bow, but in return s/he wanted a portion of the magic. S/he was mad enough that first time when I had a chance to split the magic with them, and instead I bound it all to myself. Philon wasn't the most trustworthy creature around. But then, clearly neither was I.

"I need your council on a matter." S/he nodded their head, bringing a pipe to their lips. "I'm sure that you can tell I've grown, aged, somewhat. But I'm afraid that I haven't aged nearly as much as I should have. I believe that it has something to do with the magic or the realms, but I don't know how that could be if this is the first time in eleven years that I've stepped in them. And apart from whatever minor magic that I used to get into the realms, I don't have any.

"What an interesting conundrum." Philon said, not seeming interested at all.

"Do you remember when you went to visit the dark-hearted priestess in the well?" asked Asha. I nodded. How could I forget the complicated character that called herself Circe? "She told you that when you bound the magic, and used it, you changed it. And it changed you." I wasn't even going to dwell on the fact that Asha knew the whole time what Circe was telling me during our 'sessions'. "When you hold the magic long enough, it stays with you. You may not be tethered to this world, but a piece of it is tethered to you. The magic that you hold within yourself is not minor, and it belongs to you. As for the matter of aging, look around, we don't have much of that around here. I wouldn't know where to begin in dissecting that matter."

"Have you every encountered the Three?" Philon asked, s/he was now creating shapes with the smoke s/he blew out.

"The Three Crones? That ferry you to you death?" I asked. S/he nodded in affirmation.

"I have. But what do they have to do with anything?"

"Did you ever have a conversation with them?" I nodded slowly, going through my memories to try and recall what had been said.

*Flashback*

"Your time has come. You have a choice to make." She opened her hand. There rested a cluster of
deep purple berries, much darker in hue than the ones Pip ate. They sat cupped in her palm, as bright as jewels. "Swallow the berries, and we will ferry you away to glory. Refuse them and you must return to whatever awaits. Once you choose, there is no turning back." For a moment, I heard my friends calling me, but they seemed far away, as if I could run and run and never catch them.

"Gemma." I turn to see Circe behind me. She had lost the gray pallor she wore earlier. She looked just as she did the first day I saw her at Spence, when she was Miss Moore, the teacher I loved. "You did well," she said.

"You knew Mrs. Spence had become the tree, didn't you?" I said.

"Yes." She answered.

"And you meant to save me?" I asked hopefully.

She gave me a rueful smile. "Have no illusions about me, Gemma. I meant to save myself first. To have the power second. You were a distant third."

"But I was third." I said.

"Yes," she said with a little laugh. "You were third."

"Thank you," I said. "You saved me."

"No. You saved yourself. I only helped a little bit."

"What will become of you now?" I asked. She doesn't answer.

"She will roam here in the mist for all time," the crone told me.

The choice before me in her palm. The cries of my friends grew faint in the fog. I took one plump berry and placed it on my tongue, tasting it. It was not tart. Rather, there was only a pleasant sweetness, and then nothing. It was the taste of forgetting. Of sleep and dreams with no waking. Never to long or yearn, to struggle or love or desire ever again. And I understood that this is what it truly meant to lose your soul. My mouth went numb with sweetness. The berry sat on my tongue.

Felicity carrying goldenrod in her arms. Ann's voice, strong and sure. Gorgon marching though the battlefield. I had to only swallow the berry and it would be done. That was all. Swallow the berry and with it all the struggle, all care, all hope. How easy it would've been to do.

Kartik. I left him at the tree. The tree. I was to do something there.

So very, very easy...

Kartik

With a tremendous effort, I spit the berry from my mouth, gagging as I tried to rid my tongue of the sugary numbness. My body ached as if I had pushed a heavy rock uphill forever, but now I was rid of it.

"I'm sorry. I cannot go with you. Not now. But I am to have a request, am I not?"

"If you wish it."
"I do. I should like to offer my place to another," I said, looking toward Circe.

"You would give it to me?" She said.

"You saved my life. That must count for something." I said.

"You know I abhor self-sacrifice," she replied.

"I know, but I'll not have you wandering in the mists. Too dangerous."

She smiled at me. "You've done very well, indeed, Gemma." She turned to the Three. "I accept."

Circe stepped onto the barge. The crone nodded to me.

"You've made your choice. There is no turning back now. Whatever shall happen you must accept."

"Yes, I know."

"Then we wish you luck. We'll not meet again."

*End Flashback*

"I gave up my choice of death and glory in order to come back and finish the fight. She said that my choice was final and we wouldn't meet again..." I said trailing off. The truth was slowly but surely starting to unravel itself to me.

"What an interesting turn in events." While I counted Philon as an ally, their ambiguity made it really hard to like them as a person... creature. S/he seemed to enjoy my confusion. "She offered you a sweet death, and yet you chose life, and all its triumphs and failures. It seems to me that what we have here is a case of accidental immortality." I turned to Asha, incredulity coloring my features. She looked to be contemplating what s/he said, but not openly refuting it. And Gorgon, well, she seemed like she knew that was the case already. "Welcome to the ranks." Teased Philon, a small smirk on their face.

"Are you serious about this?" I asked, still reeling.

"Well, it's only an educated guess. The only way to know for sure is if you look the same in fifty years."

"It doesn't happen often, but I've heard tales of immortality being gifted by the realms, after an incredibly courageous act. It hasn't happened before in my lifetime, but that doesn't make it any less possible." Added Asha.

"As a true immortal," Gorgon started, her snakes hissing lowly upon her head, "I recognize another." She nodded.

And that was how I found out I was immortal. After that, I made it back to the boarding house, packed up and left. I couldn't stay there any longer. I traveled all over the States after that. Never staying in one place long enough to draw attention. I thanked my lucky stars that at least I looked old enough to rent or buy my own place. I could've just as easily been stuck in my seventeen year old body for the rest of my existence. And Asha was right about my magic. It was still with me and it was different. I found out when I created new identification papers the night I returned from the
realms. I assumed that they would last at least a full day before fading out of existence, but two
days passed, and they were still there, then a week, then a month. I realized that my powers
upgraded from mere illusions to something permanent.

Alas, it was 2009 now, and I decided that my new home would be in the state I could never gather
the courage to visit, Virginia. Like my mother. Finding a map, I looked around, trying to find a city
that called out to me. Mystic Falls. Well that sounded promising. I took the map up to the teen
behind the counter.

"Going on a road trip?" The gangly teen asked as I paid.

"Something like that." I answered vaguely. I left the gas station and headed toward my black
Harley. Putting on my dark helmet, I started him up and peeled out of the parking lot. Maybe
Mystic Falls would hold some type of adventure for me.
That Mystic Town

Getting settled in Mystic Falls was easier than expected. I found a job, two actually. My primary position was working as a bartender at the Mystic Grill. It really seemed like every shop downtown had "Mystic" somewhere in its name. I was sure that the natives found it to be a joke that got old really quick. My second was a little part time gig at a dress shop. The owner was a nice older lady - well, not older than me, but you get it - who needed a little help with deliveries and odd-jobs around the shop every so often. During my life span, I had accumulated quite a bit of wealth. Some I worked for on my own, some was from my portion of my family's estate in London and my dowry. I by no means needed to work, but working took my mind off things, gave me a chance to observe new people, gave me a reason not to be alone. Only God knew how lonely it could get after over one hundred years.

I even rented a small house. It was a one bedroom deal. I would have opted for an apartment, but there weren't any unoccupied in this small town. This kind of town was a 'stay-here-and-settle-down-forever-in-a-house' kind of town. There weren't too many single, 'young' people unattached to family hanging around here.

From what I could tell, I would like living here. Of course, right now, I was on the watch list of all the older generation Mystic Falls folks. I got it. I was an unknown entity. I was new, unfamiliar. A vagabond really. I found it almost comical, how years ago it was my lover playing the part of the gypsy, and now it was me. The universe loved to keep the balance. I took the judging stares in stride though. Soon, I'd win their trust, become a staple in the community, and when I felt my time was up, ride out of town just like I rode in. Silently and with a mysterious air.

My first night working the bar went smoothly, everything was very straight forward. For the most part, the people in this town didn't ask for any type of drink that needed more prep than pouring - though I was qualified to do much more. It wasn't until I was a few weeks into the job when I got my first bout of excitement.

There was a group of kids, they looked to be around seventeen, give or take a year or two, and they would come in a lot on weekends, and even sometimes during the week to do homework or just chat. There was the pretty brunette who was dating Matt - the busboy. On the few occasions that I actually got to talk to him, he seemed cool, down to earth and all that. I think that her name was Eliza. It was something like that, it started with an 'E'. I don't know I'm not a stalker. Then there was this bubbly blonde. She was obnoxious, loud, and shallow. But despite all of those lovely qualities, she seemed like she had a good heart. Then there was another brunette. She was brown-skinned, with eyes that were more green than hazel and eyebrows that stayed arched. I was getting some serious vibes from her. Of the magical variety. Those were the main three.

There was Matt's friend, an athletic, tan boy with short dark hair. I think he was the mayor's son. He gave off a douche vibe, and he usually hung out with his fellow jocks around the pool tables
moreso that with the three girls. Matt also had a sister, Vicky, who worked as a waitress. We never talked. She was either too high, or too I'm-too-alternative-cool-to-hang, to carry on a conversation with. She was the complete opposite of her younger brother. She was apparently somewhat dating Matt's douche friend, but also 'hanging' with Matt's girlfriend's younger brother, who was in all definitions of the word, a pot head. A cute pot head, but one nonetheless. That made up the most interesting group of teenagers that frequented the Grill and also the group that sent one of their members to try and get some drinks out of me.

It was Saturday night and they wanted some shots. They sent the blonde to try and sway me. They would have had better luck with a guy. I don't know, maybe they thought I liked women as much as Felicity did. Or maybe they thought they could pull one over on me since I was new here.

"Hi." She smiled. "My table would like two rounds of shots." I was cleaning out a glass at this point. Just staring at her.

"You got I.D.?” I asked, letting boredom slip into my tone.

"Oh," she waved her hand dismissively, "all the other bartenders know us. They don't card us anymore." I put the glass down and picked up a new one, never breaking eye contact.

"Yeah, well, I'm not them. So I still need to see an I.D." She sighed dramatically. Over her shoulder I could see her group of friends trying - and failing - not to check on her progress.

"Here you go." She placed an I.D. on the counter in front of us. I picked it up looking at it. I cut my eyes back to her.

"Okay, Nancy. This I.D. is obviously fake." At her cool expression slid off her face as a deer in headlights one replaced it just as quickly. I slid it back to her. Looking around the Grill I saw that there were no parents, or cops, or cop parents in the general vicinity or paying attention. My boss was in back doing paperwork or whatever. The other bartender, Stacey, was flirting with some college guys. Her attention was securely focused on them. "But here's what I'm going to do." I pulled out a tray and started arranging shot glasses on it. I pulled out the tequila and started filling them. "I'm in a very generous mood right now. So here's the deal. Two rounds are all you get. If the law walks in and sees you, you didn't get it from me. Make something up. Don't get use to this. And finally, the most important thing, if you can't drive, don't. Come to me and I'll call you a cab. Got it?" She nodded. "Good, now money up front." She pushed the bills across the counter to me. I pushed the tray to her. I could see the shock decreasing in her eyes and being replaced by something akin to hero worship. "Alright, now get back to your friends." She grabbed her tray and I.D. and quickly walked away.
I wasn't too worried about getting caught. If worse came to worse I could cast an illusion and get out of the offense. But these kids reminded me of a younger me. But back in my day we had to go through a lot more just to get a little whiskey. I poured a shot for myself, and catching Blondie's eye I lifted my glass and gave her a nod, downing the contents without a flinch. Yeah. I think I could get along here just fine.
That Tragedy

Chapter Notes

Please enjoy and review if you feel like it, I know nice reviews always let me know if I'm doing something right.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Time passed, and I had been in town for a few months now. I had become the illegal liquor supplier to the kids whenever I worked, as well as the resident - and free - psychologist. Upside though, I finally knew all of their names now, didn't mean I always used them.

"Aren't you worried that you get caught?" Matt asked. He never participated in the drinking, something about not following in his mom's footsteps, as well as needing to be clear-headed to take care of all Vicky's mishaps.

"Not particularly." I said, wiping down the bar. "I mean, their parents probably know they drink anyway. It's not that big of a deal. In England there's basically no drinking age. I guess that's why I ignore it here. I grew up with drunken teens not getting arrested." I paused, the thought of being a drunken teen brought back both very fond and very frightening memories for me. "They don't even arrest you for being drunk in public there. Here it's against the law. America is weird." I finished. At that Matt lifted his eyebrows and just shook his head at me. "What?" I cracked a rare smile. "You know it is. And besides, I have a way of making my problems disappear." I finished cryptically.

"And that wasn't creepy at all." Matt said laughing, moving away to clear a recently vacated booth. Caroline came bursting through the door just then. Speeding toward me and then plopping on the stool right in front of me. She looked frazzled.

"Gemma, I'm having major boy issues."

"Hmmm. Don't know much about boys." I drawled.

"Yeah right. I bet you have tons of experience."

"I'm not sure if I should be flattered that you're coming to me for advice, or if you just called me a
"Oh Gemma," she sighed dramatically. She really didn't have any other type of sigh, "You know what I mean." Well, to be truthful, she wasn't wrong about me having tons of experience. I couldn't be a virgin for the rest of my extended life. I didn't do relationships, I was still healing from an epic past love. I did however, do one night stands. Plenty of those.

"Okay." I rolled my eyes. "Tell me all about your boy troubles." She then proceeded to talk my ear off for a good twenty minutes about her problem when it all boiled down to something very simple: She liked a guy, but he was sending out mixed signals so she wasn't sure if her liked her as well.

"So what should I do?" She finished.

"That was a long story. But I think I have an answer. You ready?" She nodded eagerly. "Ask the bloke out." I rolled my eyes yet again. Duh.

"What? No! There has to be another way." She crossed her arms, shaking her head.

"Listen, you know me. I'm a straight-forward kind of girl. You ask me questions, I give you answers. You got a problem, I'll give you an easy way to solve it. You don't like my advice, don't use it. That's that." I shrugged.

"Geez Gemma, you don't have get so touchy about it." I stopped wiping the glass I was holding and just looked at her. "Fine, fine. I'm leaving. I'll ask him at the party tonight."

"Be safe, and remember what I said."

"Yeah, yeah, if we can't drive I'll call you." She waved me away as she walked out of the door.

They used my advice. That I was glad for. I was glad that the Gilbert girl had called her parents to pick her up when she so obviously wasn't fit to drive in her drunken and upset state. Caroline had come in a few days after the party to tell me all about it, and at the same time telling me why none of the normal gang had been in yet. The girl's parents had died. She called them to come pick her up. She left the party earlier than she would have because she saw Caroline trying to put the moves on Matt, apparently I had given her the advice to do that but in all honesty I wouldn't have if I knew the guy she had her eye on was taken. She was upset and she left early and then there was a car slag."
accident on Wickery Bridge. Her parents were trapped in the car, but somehow a drunken and unconscious Elena had made it out with minimal injuries. It was a miracle, and I was glad, but it also reeked of foul play. How else would a completely sober doctor end up in a car accident in the dead of the night while traversing a bridge he crossed everyday? It just didn't add up to me. When you're around long enough, you learn to sniff these sorts of things out. And that Gilbert girl, either she had some sort of guardian angel looking out for her or she was just cheating death for a little while longer.

That tragedy put a damper on the rest of the summer. All the faces that entered the bar were blue, reeling from the loss of such important members of the community, but none were quite as blue as the Gilbert kids. Quite understandably. The girl, she behaved like a zombie. There was no life or joy in her eyes, probably because she thought their deaths were her fault. Before she was a social butterfly, the queen bee, but now, she shied away from her friends, opting instead to sit at her parent's tombstones writing in her journal. Probably writing especially depressing entries too.

The Gilbert boy was a different story. He had a specific look in his eyes. The one a lost puppy has. He would be in the Grill much more that humanly necessary, and it was all for one reason. One Vicky Donavan. I didn't have anything in particular against Miss Vicky, but she was no good for baby Gilbert. He had already started to change. He smoked before, what kids don't?, but now it was more of a lifeline. He rarely came in sober. And I could pinpoint it all back to Vicky. He did it to hang with her, and on the way got caught up. I watched, until I couldn't watch anymore and had to intervene.

He was sitting alone at a high top table, watching the bubbles rise from his Cola. His eyes weren't completely bloodshot, but he did have the lingering stench of weed on him. Vicky was elsewhere. Maybe on break, maybe not. I didn't care. It was a slow day with very few workers, and so my duties were expanded to encompass waitressing. It was a perfect time to hold an intervention. I walked up to his table, nabbing his attention.

"What can I get for you baby Gilbert? Or are you fine with that Cola?" His eyes narrowed at the nickname. Apparently, I was the first to call him that. The way his hair flopped over his eyes was adorable. Endearing really. It reminded me of how Tom used to be. The fact that he reminded me of my long gone brother just made me want to save him even more. I would be able to be the supportive big sister my big brother could never quite achieve with me.

"Don't call me that." He scowled. "And I'm fine." I just smirked and sat in the chair just across from him.

"I don't believe that. And I'm not talking about the cola."

"Listen, I'm waiting for someone so-"
"Vicky's busy out back with one of her druggie groupies. Her break was over five minutes ago, I think it's safe to say she won't be back anytime soon." I interrupted his weak attempt at getting me to leave. "You know baby G. You and me, we are very much alike."

"Oh?" He asked, sarcastically. "Please, do tell."

"We were both put in situations we weren't ready for. Both parentless." His eyes glazed over at this. "Yeah. You aren't the only one who's ever suffered the loss of loved ones." There was a long pause at this.

"How'd it happen?" He asked quietly. "If you don't mind me asking." He amended.

"It was my mother first. She was murdered in cold blood. After seeing her dead body on the street, it was almost like I could see it happening right in front of me." I reflected back on that fateful day when I had my first premonition. "My father died much, much slower. He was so broken over the loss of my mother that he turned to drugs." I gave him a pointed look, "We got him into rehab eventually but by then he was past the point where his mind and body could be saved. I wasn't there when he died. I couldn't bear to see him like that."

"So you left him to die by himself?!!" Jeremy exploded, seemingly offended on behalf of my deceased father.

"No. While I was in America when he passed, my brother was there with him." I stated sadly. "I realize that what I did was selfish, but I was young then, still a teenager."

"You're still young." said Jeremy.

"Yeah, yeah." I chuckled without humor. Forever young. What a joke. "You have to understand that things change as time moves on. Things that didn't matter much once, matter the most later on. So you see, we're very much alike. Sure things in our lives happened differently, but it's the same result. I like to think that I grew up alright. Just like you can. But first you have to stop wallowing in this weird depression you've got going on. Recreational drugs are cool for just that: recreation. But when you start using them for escape, nothing good can come out of it. I would know." I stood up to leave. "People come in and out of our lives all of the time babe, and it hurts. But you have to keep your heart open anyway to collect all the love being sent your way, because that's the only thing that will help you heal." I started to walk back to the bar.
"Wait." Jeremy said. I stopped, turning my head back to him slightly. "Whatever happened to your brother?" I slowly turned back to the bar, a sad smile on my lips.

"Oh, he's long gone. Things happen, you know." I shrugged. Tom had lived a good, long life. "Another difference. I'm all alone, you've still got your sister, aunt, friends. You'll make it through, no problem."

Chapter End Notes

Aww, some Gemma and Jeremy bonding. Gotta love it.
That Odd and Handsome Stranger

This wasn't the first time this handsome stranger had come here. The first time he came here he was making googly eyes at Caroline. I came from a time where girls younger than her were married off to men much older than him. Seeing that large of an age gap didn't phase me. As long as it was consensual, it wasn't my business. But his googly eyes seemed insincere, and it seemed that whatever reason that he was pursuing this girl had an ulterior motive. Even so, it wasn't my business, but I would keep an eye on this guy for my own peace of mind.

He left so quickly that first time, I almost didn't see him go. Caroline surely didn't, she was left looking around for him. I suppose he did it to get her interested, to increase his mystery. It worked. I was intrigued as well. Caroline found me before she left with her friend that night.

"Did you see that hot guy Gemma? He was totally giving me the eye." She squeaked that annoyingly high pitched squeal only she could make.

"Yeah. I saw him." I replied calmly.

"I know he looks like he's in college, but do you think I have a chance?" I wasn't about to encourage her to seek out this guy with obviously ulterior motives, but I had to respond in some way.

"Whatever happens, just be aware and be careful."

"That didn't answer my question, Gem." I raised an eyebrow and her liberal use of my name.

"You should be aware by now that I only say what I want to say, not necessarily what you want to hear."

"Fine, fine. Stop being such a grouch. I'm leaving already." I just shook my head at her dramatics.

That was weeks ago. Word on the street was that she and him were a couple, and just as quickly broke it off. When still together, they would rub their relationship in the faces of the Gilbert girl and her new boyfriend, who happened to be this mystery guy's younger brother. You got all the best gossip working at the bar. Caroline would now glare at him whenever he was around. Things sure moved fast in Mystic Falls, especially when you were on the outside of things looking in.
This mystery guy, Damon, Stacey enlightened me, something about him (and his brother really) didn't sit right with me. So I decided to do a lot more observation of his character.

I knew how to make myself go unnoticed, it was a combination of using skills gained from years of sneaking around and a pinch of magic. I was also great at observing people from afar. He brooded, a lot. I overheard him talking about his younger brother once to Caroline's group of friends. He said that Stefan was the brooder in the family. But I would watch as he put away the bourbon he loved so dearly. I saw that he enjoyed brooding just as much. And could he put that alcohol away! At first I had some slight trepidation at continuing to serve him, afraid that he would pass out and die from alcohol poisoning, and then I was just morbidly fascinated with how much he could actually drink. So I just kept filling his cup. And he never noticed me because I willed it. I wanted to know more about the intriguing mystery he presented before I revealed myself.

I watched the people he surrounded himself with as well. There was his younger brother, Stefan. He was so serious all the time. I was afraid to get wrinkles just by watching him. But he was polite, and he had a charm about him I had only seen in the old days. Damon would watch the Gilbert girl too. When he watched her, he would get a faraway look in his eyes. I knew that look, I wore that look a lot. It was the look of a love lost. She - Elena was her name - must've reminded him of someone he'd loved dearly.

Then there was Bonnie. The only thing I could really use to describe her is that she felt familiar. Sometimes, after touching someone she would get a glazed look in her eye. The same kind of look I imagined I had whenever I used to get a vision. Perhaps I was in the presence of another magic user. And perhaps she didn't know about it yet.

I decided that I wanted to get to know this strange group of people more. They seemed like they attracted trouble. And trouble was the only fun thing around nowadays. I deemed that it was time for my up-close observations of Damon to start, so I took down the spell that pushed me to the side of peoples focus and I stepped into the spotlight, to pour Damon another drink. He stopped me before I walked away to tend to the next customer.

"Hey. Are you new? Because I haven't seen you around before and believe me, I would remember a face that gorgeous." My lips twitched in amusement at his obvious flirting, but pulled back down into a neutral expression just as fast. You needed more than sweet words to penetrate a heart coated with stone and poison.

"Nope. Been working here for months. You just must not be very observant." I moved on to mix another drink, but he was hooked now.
"And with an accent. It's impossible for that piece of information to slide past my radar. Where have you been hiding?"

"Just in plain sight. I'm the only one who never cuts off your drinks or asks that you vacate the premises." That caught his attention. I saw a flash of recognition in his eyes.

"Tuesday, Thursday, and Fridays." He said. "I knew there was something special about those days."

"Yeah. Uninterrupted drinking time courtesy of me." I sang. Those were the days I worked.

"Well I apologize for not noticing you before. I would have hit on you sooner and by now we'd be in my bed." He smirked and winked saucily. I stifled a smile at his audacity.

"If that was supposed to be a hint for something I must apologize. It went right over my head." I blinked innocently. He grinned predatorily.

"How about when you get off of work, you and I go somewhere quiet to get better acquainted?"

"While I find your bold words quite entertaining, and I'm sure that going somewhere quiet with you would be even more entertaining, I must decline for I'm currently in mourning."

"Sorry to hear that, but are you sure I can't convince you to take a walk with me?" He asked again, his glacier blue eyes dilated unnaturally and I finally grasped that he was trying to hypnotise me somehow.

"I bet you'd like to take that walk down a dark alleyways, wouldn't you?" I ran my hand lightly up his arm. I was just trying to tease him, but I couldn't help but notice that he had some nice muscle definition.

"Preferably." He said, I could see him getting excited.

"Sorry. Not interested." I removed my hand and walked to the other end of the bar. Grabbing a full bottle of his choice of liquor. I came back and sat it next to him. "You seem to be having a bad day."
I'll just sit this within reach." He caught my arm before I could leave again.

"The name's Damon. Damon Salvatore." I transformed his hold on my wrist to a handshake.

"Gemma. Just Gemma. It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance." He kissed the back of my hand like gentlemen used to do.

"The pleasure's all mine." I gave him a smile sweet enough to induce cavities, then walked away again.
In an effort to start the year on a good non-procrastinating foot, I'm gonna put out all the updated chapters now, which is just like two, but whatever. Happy New Years.

"So tell me about yourself Ms. Gemma." Damon Salvatore "requested" one night while I was working. He had been there for an hour and a few drinks already. Brooding away about something, watching me perform my tasks over his glass. He thought he was being covert, but I would be able to feel his eyes on me in pitch blackness. I cut a look at him, and decided to humor him.

"I was born, I grew up, the end." He chuckled at this.

"So vague Gemma." He chastised. "I'm sure more things have happened than that. I'm sure very interesting things have happened to you, you're such an interesting person. Wouldn't you care to share?" His eyes dilated again, like they did the first time we met. And when I sighed but didn't answer his question right away, I saw a glint of confusion and anger pass through his eyes.

"Nope. I'm pretty sure I'm at the end of my story." I'd lived a normal lifetime, and then some. Immortality is kind of endgame.

"Impossible. A pretty little thing like you? Never. Tell me about your family." His glass was empty, so I refilled it. He knocked back a swallow appreciatively.

"What do you want to know?" I asked warily.

"Tell me about your father." He asked.

"Dead." I answered.

"Your mother?"
"Dead."

"Any siblings?"

"I had an older brother."

"And he's your sister now?" He tried to joke.

"Cute." I said without a smile. "He's dead as well."

"So, do you have any family at all? Or am I just causing you unnecessary grief right now?"

"You ask this after you finish killing off my immediate family?" I raised an eyebrow in mock anger.

"Oh. She has jokes." He smirked.

"I should have a few nieces and nephews running around somewhere." Nevermind that the living ones would probably be great-to-whatever-power-grand nieces and nephews.

"Well that's depressing."

"I'm sure your background isn't any better. Come on. Out with it." He looked me over, as if deciding whether or not I was worthy to recieve the information he was about to impart to me. He must have like what he saw.

"Had a mother, she died giving birth to my brother. Had a father. He's just dead." He said drolly.

"Well that's unfortunate."

"Yes extremely, especially since I don't have your luck."
"And what luck would that be?"

"Your brother's dead, but I can only wish death on mine." This could've seemed rude. But I was old, and I saw the pain in his eyes when he said what he said about his brother. Obviously, they had some issues to work out.

"If I was anyone else," I started slowly, measuring my words, "I would've been terribly offended by that statement and vowed never to talk to you again. If I was anyone else, I'd tell you that you shouldn't wish death on your family. But I don't know you or your reasons, and you don't know me. But I'm just me. No one else." I moved to pour him another drink. He seemed surprised at my speech and my actions.

"You should stick with the first option and never speak to me again." He said, staring down at his drink, swirling it in the glass.

"And I can tell that's what you think you want, but really, it's the opposite of what you need." He scoffed.

"Like you know anything."

"I know a lot, but I don't know everything." I replied vaguely.

"What are you, some sort of psychic?" He leered at me. By the conflict in his eyes, I could tell that while he was halfway joking, he was also somewhat serious. That intrigued me because it meant that at some level, Damon believed in the supernatural. And who really believes in the supernatural other than those that have been exposed to it, and those that were a part of it? It made me wonder which of these groups Damon belonged to.

"You'd like that wouldn't you? An answer about who I am in a neat little package?"

"Nah. I like the chase. I like figuring things out on my own." He said, glint in his eye.

"I'm sure." I drawled.
"We shouldn't be friends." He said suddenly, and suddenly serious. "It's not a good idea to make friends with me. I don't do friends."

"First of all, who said we were friends?" I quipped. "And second of all, that whole foreboding thing you're doing, someone beat you there already. His name was Edward Cullen, and spoiler alert, he gets the girl in the end." His serious demeanor broke at that.

"I don't understand how it always ends up with a discussion about Twilight." He murmured to himself. To me he said, "I didn't peg you for a Twilight fan." He chuckled somewhat.

"I'm not, I just had to see what all the hype was about. I have to stay in the loop with teen literature these days to understand the pop culture references everyone's making, you know." He shook his head, becoming serious once more.

"You should know that I'm a dangerous guy."

"I've been told I can be pretty dangerous myself." I responded, not batting an eyelash.

"I'm not nice. I can be a downright ass."

"I've been called a bitch by the worst of them." I matched him.

"I attract a lot of trouble." He said, watching my eyes for the spike of emotion, fear in particular, that he was hoping to see. Too bad for him I was past feeling fear.

"Trouble's the only interesting thing around nowadays." I replied smoothly, using his word-of-the-day.

"You're a strange one." He said.

"I've been told that too. Quick question, are you Manic Depressive? You're throwing out some pretty impressive, and contradicting, vibes."
"Probably," he started glumly, "I feel things much more deeply than the average human." For some reason, he was stressing the 'human' part of his response. Well, I guess I know what group he belongs to now.

"Well out with it, then. Tell me about this girl that broke your heart." He looked at me, shocked and suspicious.

"I never said anything about a girl."

"You didn't have to. Why else would two brothers be rooting for the death of the other?" I asked, hinting back at our earlier conversation. "There's always a dame involved. Didn't you know? Love triangles are all the rage. How that boring Bella girl managed to attract both a vampire and a werewolf still astounds me." He just looked at me, contemplating.

"Her name was Katerina. We knew her as Katherine."

"Oh. A false name. I like this story already." He just rolled his vibrant eyes and continued. He told me of a beautiful, amazing girl who had two brother wrapped around her figures, unknown to them. He finished the story with her tragic death, but while he was recalling the events, I couldn't help but to feel that he was leaving out quiet a big chunk of the facts. But, I decided to let sleeping dogs lie, he was already telling me something I could only guess not many people heard about. I decided to match his story he so graciously offered, with one of my own.

"I have a story too." I started.

"Oh, what about?" He sang, donning his playful mask again, wiping away all seriousness that the retelling of his history brought upon his face.

"I was actually born in India." His eyes widened in surprise.

"Really..." he urged me to continue.

"Yep, born and raised. I really only lived in England for a little while to go to secondary school. It
was a private place, very dreary. "On the days that we didn't accidentally release fae spirits from the realms. "But I digress, there was a story my Papa used to tell our guests. He would tell it all the time, it was his favorite. A real crowd pleaser too."

"Are we going to get to the story eventually? I have things to do, people to see..." Damon groused, playfully. I cut him a look.

"Yeah right." I said, filling his glass yet again. "Excuse me for getting caught up in the splendor of the past, I didn't interrupt you when you were talking." I frowned.

"Yeah, yeah." He waved in a 'go ahead' gesture. I just sighed.

"Now where was I, oh yes." I remembered, gathering my thoughts, "When I was much younger, maybe four or five, still in India, I used to play out in the gardens all of the time. My parents thought nothing of it, the help was always around, there were many eyes on me. Most days, it was fine, I was safe out there, but then there was the whole thing about the garden being just on the edge of the wilds. One day, my Papa was out there with me, a little ways away, reading the paper. I was in the field, stick in my hand, I imagine I must have had a right good imagination. Apparently I was a knight in shining armor, fighting off my enemies." I gave a small smile, pausing for a second, trying to remember the actual occurrence and not just my father's recollection of it. Like always, it escaped me. "And that was when the tiger showed himself."

"Hold on, you didn't say anything about a tiger in the summary of this. How am I supposed to believe you're telling the truth? Pshhht! A tiger."

"I guess you'll never know if I'm telling the truth or not since you weren't there, but is it so hard to believe that a tiger would be lurking in an undeveloped part of India?" He looked as though he was considering the plausibility. "Exactly, so like I was saying," looking at him pointedly, "I was 'sword-playing' when this gigantic tiger comes out of the woodworks. According to Papa, I set down my stick, and bowed to the tiger saying 'If you have honorable intentions, you may pass without fear.'" I gave a almost silent chuckle then. "Can you believe that? That I was a blimey four year old talking to a tiger without fear?"

"Then what happened?"

"The tiger walked away, and my Papa came rushing down to me, taking me inside. For the longest time, I thought that was the end of the story. That was as far as he got whenever he would tell it at any of our social gatherings. It wasn't until years later, when he was having an especially lucid moment on his sickbed that he told me what happened afterward. He hired men, to take him
through the jungle, to track the tiger that did no one harm. And when he found the tiger, he shot him dead."

"Aren't tigers on the endangered species list?" Damon asked, ruining the moment. Because of his antics, I had to suppress a smile.

"That's the not the point Damon, the point is, he didn't kill the tiger because he was brave or because he was protecting anyone, he killed it out of fear for what it might do." He let that stew for a moment.

"Why do I feel like there's some sort message you wanted me to gain from that story?"

"What kind of bartender would I be if didn't riddle your mind with all sorts of interesting conundrums?"

"A normal one?" He snarked.

"Yeah, yeah, whatever. The stories of my life don't come without a price. One day when you need some advice, I'll pop up in your head, spewing this story, and you'll finally understand."

"So you're telling me... that the price of your story... is an all access pass of you in my mind? I can deal with that." I just gave him a bland look and went to serve the other customers I had been neglecting during my extended chat with him.

Months later, I would reflect on this moment as the day when Damon Salvatore began to trust me. I would realize that this story he told me was the closest thing to the truth that he could give me, without exposing the existence of...other beings in the world. Like I didn't already know.

And that seemed like an ending, did it not? Never fear, it wasn't long enough for me so I decided to add some more. ;)

I had been invited to the Founder's Ball by the Mayor's wife. It was strange, I hadn't had much interaction with her since I'd moved into town. I stuck to my normal haunts, the Grille, the dress shop, my house, places she would never be seen at, but somehow she cornered me while I was taking a break in the park to invite me.
The sunshine that had been previously warming my body was momentarily shaded by someone walking in front of me. That person soon sat down next to me on the bench where I had been relaxing my eyes, previously reading, and cleared their throat daintily to get my attention. I opened one of my eyelids to see if the person asking for my attention was worthy of getting it, and seeing that it was Mrs. Lockwood, the mayor's wife, aroused my curiosity. I sat up from my relaxed posture and gave her my undivided attention.

"How are you Gemma?" She asked me, smile too perfect to be real, and eyes too steely just to be giving a greeting.

"I am well, Mrs. Lockwood. How are you this lovely afternoon?" I asked, matching her smile. My genteel training coming out.

"Wonderful, thank you so much for asking." She pushed her perfectly coiffed hair back, not that it was in her eyes or anything. "Listen, the town's annual founder's ball is coming up soon." I nodded, feigning interest. I was so over balls, nothing good ever happened at them. "And usually, only descendants of founders and their guests are invited." Which meant basically the whole town minus a few. "However, Gemma, you have caught my eye. You're new to town and just looking at you I know that you were born from class." Well, she wasn't wrong. "I am making an exception and giving you an standing invitation to all founder related activities - bar the meetings - for as long as you stay in our delightful town."

"Well, that is awfully generous of you Mrs. Lockwood." And strange, I didn't know why she was inviting me anywhere. "But you're far too kind. I don't want to make you break any rules for me."

"Nonsense, dear." I was way older than her. "It's my pleasure." Now I was sure that she had ulterior motives, just like basically everyone else, but I could tell she was used to getting her way and I wasn't going anywhere until I accepted.

"Well, I suppose I'll see you at the party then?"

"Wonderful, you'll soon see that you've made the right choice. Only the cream-of-the crop is granted entrance. I'll put you on the list right away. Also, Gemma, I wonder...have you ever seen the Queen?" So we were getting to the root of her generosity.
"Never had a full conversation with her, but she did acknowledge me during my debut into society." At this Mrs. Lockwood gave out what could've been classified as a girlish screech had she not been well into her forties.

"That is amazing. You have to tell me all about it." And then I got it. Mrs. Lockwood was an anglophile. Well, whatever worked in my favor.

*end flashback*

I arrived to the founder's party, stag, and gave my name to the large man at the door whose black suit, shades, and ear piece screamed security. I was waved through with a terse nod, and I found myself holding a glass of alcohol and wandering around before I knew it. I spotted Damon in the crowd, guiding a young Caroline through the throng.

"I thought you and Blondie were through?" I asked him over a glass of champagne. He had found himself in my neck of the woods, sans date.

"You seem quite interested there Gem. Are you upset I didn't escort you?"

"Just an observation, Damie, don't get ahead of yourself." I said, sipping the cool, bubbly liquid.

"Is that jealousy I detect Miss Gemma?" He lifted his eyebrow.

"Only if your feeling your own jealousy. Like I said, it was only an observation."

"What brings you over on this side of town? I was beginning to think that you only existed in the bar."

"Oh sure, of course. It's the presence of all that liquor that keeps me anchored to this plane of existence."

"I knew it..." He played along. "But really, I didn't know you had friends in high places."
"Indeed, did you know that back when I was part of the social scene in London I was 82nd in line for the throne."

"Really? So only 81 people had to die for you to be crowned? That's doable."

"I knew I wasn't the only one who thought so. Mrs. Lockwood just loved that little tidbit. Ready for a secret? She was the one who organized my admittance."

"Whaaat? Well, you just have the most important woman in town wrapped around your little finger, don't you?"

"I assure you, it wasn't by choice."

"You know, the Salvatores are a pretty important family in Mystic Falls." Somehow he had gotten ahold of my arm and started guiding me to a room off to the side of the main hallway. When we stopped, he gestured to an old looking sheet of parchment, enclosed in a glass case. After looking it over, two names popped out to me, Damon and Stefan Salvatore. I repeated them aloud.

"Yes, the original Salvatore brothers. They were here for the first ever founder's ball. You see, our family is practically royalty here." Knowing everything I knew, I found it highly unlikely that brothers with that much animosity toward each other just so happened to have namesakes that attended the first founder's ball. But, in the spirit of all things fallacious, I decided to play my part of ignorant bystander.

"Oh really?" I looked around the room, spotting an abandoned tray of champagne, I grabbed three, and returned to him, handing over only one. I was a growing girl, I needed my alcohol no matter how meager it may be. "Well, since we're both practically royalty, it only makes sense to celebrate with a toast." We clanged our flutes with all the finesse of the well bred sods we were.

"You know, you're a lot more...talkative outside of work."

"Blame it on the alcohol, love. They don't let me partake enough while I'm on the clock." At that moment in time, I felt like a layer of Damon Salvatore's facade was about to be peeled back for me to see his inner workings, unfortunately, we were interrupted by Jeremy's sister, who somehow got away from her date, Damon's brother. In the span of a few milliseconds, Damon's guard went back up to full lock down, and resolve flashed in his eyes.
"I couldn't help but overhear you talking about the original Salvatore brothers." Elena started. He flashed me what I knew to be a parting grin and he turned to face her. Damon was a man with a plan. I didn't know what that plan was, didn't really care to know, so I took my champagne and made my way to the exit. Before I was completely out of the room, I turned back to see Damon looking at me. He sent me a rather serious nod, I replied with a cheeky wink and a tip of one of my glasses, leaving him to speak with Elena, passing both Stefan and Blondie on my way out. I was cornered by Mrs. Lockwood again, and forced to regale her with modified stories of my time at Spence. I didn't see Damon for the rest of the night.

Well, you likey? Tell me how you feel. :)

Ren!
Damon hadn't been spotted at the Grille for a few days. I wasn't concerned. No, I was merely interested, curious about what was keeping him. Did whatever he was angling for at the Founder's ball pay off, leaving him with no reason to stay in the town any longer? I would hope not. I found him rather charming when he wasn't being downright irritating, and I'd hope we were at a point in this... *friendship*, that he would at least give a quick farewell before departing. No matter, I was a big girl and whether or not he chose to acknowledge me did not determine my mood for the day. It was no use getting attached to anyone anyway.

Still, there was a niggling feeling in my gut that had me on edge. It was like those feelings you get when you leave the iron on at home when you've gone to work. And not knowing *why* I was feeling this was making me severely displeased. One thing that did set off my radar was the younger Salvatore brother. His normal broody disposition was no more. He was brighter, happier, and had a lighter step in his walk. Sure these differences were very minute, I only caught them because I had *years* to work on my observation skills, but to me, these observations, paired with Damon's seeming disappearance, made me awfully suspicious.

I had my ear to the floor, trying to pick up bits and pieces of conversations that may have given me clues about his whereabouts, but the residents of Mystic Falls were a egocentric bunch. They didn't notice the absence of someone who had become such a staple in at least the bar community. Or perhaps I was at fault for reading too much into his absence. I decided to find out when his brother came to the bar to give his order.

"Uh hey. Can I get two number fours to go please?" He asked, I nodded, moving to the kitchen to place the order. Through trial and error, I have found that the best fact finding strategy for me is to be straightforward. Don't get me wrong, I can be silvertongued when the situation calls for it, but bluntness is my specialty. So I decided to use it here.

"So I've noticed that your brother hasn't been around drinking up all my alcohol stores lately. He go out of town?" I asked, raising an eyebrow in my versions of my mother's tell-me-all-your-secrets face.

"Um, oh, Damon? Yeah, he went out of town on business. It's very demanding, he probably won't be back for quite a while." Now, I didn't know what kind of supernatural Damon - and by extension - Stefan was. But I was of the firm belief that anyone in any supernatural group should have the wits about them to lie convincingly, and Stefan was not doing a very good job. He was trying to come off as an innocent party, but I heard the doublespeak, the incorporation of the truth into a lie to make it easier spoken. I'm sure that Damon wouldn't be back for *quite* a while, but Stefan's frame of reference and mine could be wildly different, changing the whole meaning.
I found it highly unlikely that a brothers with such bad blood between them would be so forthcoming and joyous in any news pertaining the other. Stefan was hiding something, and as soon as work was over I'd be heading over to the Salvatore Boarding House to see what was going on. Stefan's order came up, and after I gave it to him, he left, not without sparing me a interested glance that I'm sure he thought I didn't notice. Jeremy came in a little after him, and came to sit across from me at the bar. I hadn't seen him in a while, so it made my day a smidge better.

"Baby Gilbert, to what do I owe the extreme pleasure of you gracing me with your presence?" I asked, albeit a bit sarcastically.

"Yeah, yeah Gemma, calm down with all of that. I just decided that I didn't feel like doing my homework at home, so I decided to do it here, maybe talk a bit with my friend that works here."

"It's Vicky's day off." I replied, sourly.

"I was talking about you." At that I smiled.

"I was hoping you were. So what's on the agenda?" I asked, cleaning off the bar top with a rag.

"Oh, my new history teacher has me doing a report on...something. Get this, his name is Alaric Saltzman, I think he wants the class to think he's cool or whatever. He wants us to call him Ric." He rolled his eyes.

"How interesting." I replied. "Oh yes, I do suppose that a new history teacher was in the works, after what happened to that other one. Nasty business that. Have to make sure you're being careful after dark here, what with that wild animal on the loose."

"You talk like you don't think that it's a wild animal at all Gemma."

"Whatsoever gave that notion, dear Jeremy?"

"Hmm. Whatever." He gained a speculative look in his eyes, then asked me another question. "Does everyone from the UK talk like you?"
"What do you mean?"

"You know, like proper. Really proper. Yeah sure sometimes you use slang and it's like you're acting your age, and then other times, it's like your a old lady or something." I had to smile at the brash way he was explaining himself to me. I didn't care to admit it, but he was right. Sometimes I slipped into my old way of speaking, that Victorian English that only some of those in high society still spoke. It was a part of me still, albeit a very old part. Old and ingrained.

"You know Jeremy, you're a very observant person. Way more observant that most of the people in the town. You'll probably uncover some pretty interesting information because of it. In fact, I'd wager that because of how detail oriented you are, you'll either put yourself in danger, or be a real asset to someone that needs help, and possibly both."

"You didn't answer the question."

"What did I say? Observant."

"Well anyway, I didn't do my last assignment, so he cut me some slack and allowed me to make it up."

"So I'm guess that he's not that bad of a guy?"

"He's not that bad of a person, but he's still a teacher."

"And of course, teachers are the villains to the heroes that are students." I mocked.

"Whatever. Like I was saying, I found some old notebooks, journals even, in my house. They belonged to my ancestor that was alive back when the town was being founded. This guy was mad crazy, he wrote about demons and monsters plaguing that town, roaming the streets at night. If I didn't know any better, I'd think that you and him were up talking about the things that go bump in the night."

"Silly boy."
"I'm planning on writing my report on him. It's way more interesting than anything else in the history books." And with that, he began reading the journals and I went back to work.

Finished with my shift, I gathered my belongings quickly, intent on heading over to the boarding house as soon as possible. The sun was still out, maybe three or four hours from sunset, and I knew that Stefan was going to be at the high school's car wash. The only wildcard was going to be Uncle Salvatore, Zach. I didn't know much about him but I had measures in place to make sure his presence was not an issue.

What I didn't account for at all was Blondie being here. She was walking, I assumed she was just coming from the carwash since she had her swim suit on underneath her loose summer clothes. There was a glazed look in her eyes as she headed to the front door and walked in without knocking. Something was going on and I wanted to know what it was, so I donned my notice-me-not spell and followed her.

I don't think she consciously knew what was going on. It really seemed like she was sleep walking. Last minute turns, bouts of standing in one spot for a while, I'm surprised she didn't get caught by Zach by the way things were going. Finally she made it to a large, sturdy bolted door, which when unlocked made a resounding click. Loud enough, I'd wager, to alert Zach if he were anywhere around. Following Caroline down the dungeonesque steps, I awaited his arrival to the party.

It seemed that Blondie's destination was a cell at the end of the basement/dungeon hallway. The whole set up was a little too old world for my tastes. Looking into the window of the cell was none other than Damon, the man I'd been searching for, looking quite peaky, surrounded by strange green plants tying to convince a now frightened looking Caroline to unlock his prison. First thing that ran through my mind was that Stefan was a lying bastard. Second thing was a train of thought focusing on reasons that Damon was being detained, other than the obvious sibling issues. I think this went well passed that.

I was so involved in my thoughts I missed Blondie unlocking the door, which resulted in Zach coming out of nowhere yelling, "Noooo!" Blondie ran away like a scared rabbit, and Zach tried to lock and secure Damon's door, but he was too close to the window and I could see Damon's intent in his eyes.

Unveiling myself, I pushed Zach out of the way just as Damon's arm was coming down to strangle him. I quickly locked the door and stepped away, hearing Damon's angered growl resonate through me, drawing my attention toward him to really look at him.

The whites of his eyes were now red, the irises still blue, a striking contrast. Black veins webbed underneath his eyes, and elongated canines graced his mouth. All and all, it was a very dramatic look. Turning back to Zach, I refocused his attention.
"I think it's time for you to go on vacation. I really think you've earned it."

He looked at me then, taking his gaze off of Damon. His right hand was rubbing his neck, belatedly realizing how close to death by broken neck he had become. Well, I guess those are just the chances you take when you run with vamps.

"Don't you?" I reinforced. "I mean, other people can hold down the fort here. Personally, I think there's too much drama. You should go somewhere to forget, where all the worries are superficial." He found himself nodding with my logic. I handed him a large wad of money. "Pack a small bag, only what you need. Then get out of here." He nodded again, taking the money. Then he turned and ran upstairs.

Damon had been watching the precedings almost silently, the random snarl interrupting every so often. His eyes were now completely focused on me.

"What are you?" He asked.

"So a vampire, huh?" I said, not answering his question. "I have seen a lot in my life but I can't say I ever met a vampire before."

"So you're not a vampire, yet you're taking all of this so calmly. What are you?"

"What can I do for you Damon?"

"Let me out!" He roared. Rattling the cell bars.

"I want to, but Damie, you're a bit too feral for me at the moment." I said, waving at his exaggerated features. "I'll let you out, as soon as you're not gunning for my neck. You don't seem to like those plants too much. Are they the source of your discomfort? What can I do to make it better for you before I let you out so you don't go on a rampage?" He sighed, fight let out of him, and all that was left was only thinly veiled curiosity, that and hunger.

"I'm thirsty." He said softly.
"And what would you like me to bring you?"

"In the next room there's a fridge full of blood bags. Bring them to me." He said after sighing again. Fifteen bags later and he was looking so much better. I unlocked and swung open the door to his cell. He considered me for a moment, before using what I can only guess was super speed to run upstairs. When I heard a slew of angry curse words, I hastened my following of him.

There he was, hiding in the shadows, glaring at the light. I could see part of him was burnt. I was confused, having seen him plenty of times coming into the bar from the sunny outdoors, but I chalked it up to having something to do with the terms of his imprisonment. He wasn't healing, so I held my wrist in front of his mouth, startling him. The fact that he was surprised didn't stop him from holding onto my arm.

"You are very strange indeed Gemma. You're offering up your vein to a hungry vampire."

"I just fed you, this is just for the burns. Only a few pulls from you sir, or else you'll be getting something else you definitely didn't ask for.

His hold on my arm turned into something more restricting as he lowered his head, eyes still on mine. When his teeth sunk into my skin though, his eyes snapped shut and a rumbling moan was released from him, travelling up and into me. Having my blood sucked by a vampire wasn't exactly what I was expecting. To sum it up, I was not wholly displeased with the experience. Yes, his fangs hurt piercing my skin, but when he started pulling, there was only a tingling feeling that traversed my body, concentrating on some of my more neglected areas.

If you catch my drift.

And then it was over. He retracted his fangs and spent a good minute licking the wound he left behind. When I thought he was finally finished, he prolonged our contact by piercing his own finger with a fang. He rubbed my marks with the blood that welled up on his finger, until there was no evidence left of the deed.

He released my arm, straightening up and clearing his throat. I suppose trying to get back into the cool and collected type that he personified.

"What are you?" He asked again, searching for something in my eyes.
"I'm just me. Same old Gemma." I answered with a small smirk.

"Okay." He rolled his eyes. "How did you know I was here?"

"I didn't. I came here to do a little detective work. Your brother's a smarmy liar. Imagine my surprise when I followed little Caroline to your holding place. What was that plant?" He regarded me for a moment.

"Vervain. It acts as as poison of sorts to us vampires. What other creatures have you come across?"

"What ever do you mean?" I asked coyly.

"Don't play with me. Earlier you said you'd seen a lot of things but never a vampire. What other types of things?"

"Well twist my arm why don't you. I'm more familiar with creatures of the fae realms. I also know a bit about wolves and witches."

"Werewolves?" He laughed. "Werewolves don't exist." He looked so sure of himself.

"Says you. With the amount of murders in the town, which I now believe the cause to be vampires," I gave him a scathing look, "I imagine wolves will be cropping out of the woodworks eventually. Sooner than later probably." I finished, more to myself.

"So you talked to my brother."

"Yep. He's the reason I came over here right after work. He was entirely too happy at your absence."

"Yeah. I'm going to have to have a few choice words with Steffie. And Zach, what sort of witchie mojo did you put on him to make him leave so easily."
"That, dear Damon, was only the power of suggestion at work. No magic necessary. You made my job very easy with that stunt you pulled just moments before. And about that Damon, really? I know there's bad blood between you and your brother, but what did your uncle do to deserve that treatment?"

"One, he's my great-many-times nephew. Two, he helped Stefan plan this! You're supposed to be on my side here Gemma! What happened to no judgement?"

"First, I'm on team Gemma til the end. Since you're my bar-buddy I guess I can be on team Damon too, to an extent." I levelled him with a look. "Second, how old are you to have a thirty-something year old great-something nephew?"

"We're buddies now Gem? What kind of buddies?" He wiggled his eyebrows lasciviously.

"Not that kind of buddy. I would think that me coming down here and saving your arse, and apparently bloodline, would prove our, dare I say it, relationship, to you. Now stop being evasive and answer the bloody question."

"Careful Gem, if you keep cursing in that adorable accent I may have to keep you." I just looked at him. "Fine, I was changed when I was twenty-four."

"Are we really having this moment?" I groused. "And how long, pray tell, have you been twenty-four?"

"Since 1864."

"Well damn Grandpa!" I chuckled.

"Hardy-har-har Gemma. Just yuck it up over there. Now, since you're team Damon now, I need you to do me a favor." He had his arm around my shoulders and was guiding me to the door staying in the shaded areas and in some spots simply hiding behind me.

"Whoa, whoa Mister. I said I was on your team, not your lackey." He gave me a pitiful look.
"But Gem, I can't leave the house until nightfall. Stefan took my daylight ring." Hmmm. So that's how he could be out in the light. "I just need you to send a little message to Stefan for me."

"Don't you think this little partnership we have going here would be more effective the fewer amount of people knew about it? I mean, it's always the people who have the unknown allies who win in the end."

"...You're right. But how else am I supposed to get a message to him?" I gave him a bland look.

"You've a mobile. Use it."

"Not as dramatic, but serviceable." He shrugged.

"Ok, well, if that's all I'm going to take a nap. Try not to get detained again." I said, walking to the door.

"If I do, I'll just call you to help me. Now that I've had your blood, I'll be able to summon you."

"What, like Caroline?"

"Exactly."

"Well, you'll find Mr. Salvatore, that things that work on other people don't really work on me. But you know that already, don't you?" I responded, closing the door behind me.

DPOV

When Gemma left, I felt for the first time in my undead life, anxious. Not even all the years I had been searching for Katherine had I felt something like this. It had to have something to do with her blood. Oh that blood, it was magnificent. The best blood I'd ever had in my life. I never thought I'd say this, but it was better than sex, not that I'd ever admit that out loud. Which begged the question,
what would sex with her be like?

But more importantly, what was she? Human? Or some type of supernatural? She wasn't a vampire, nor werewolf - the jury was still out on their existence - nor fae creature - not that I'd ever met one and known about it. So was she human, or a witch? She said she didn't use any magic to make Zach leave. So human, or some other supernatural I'd never come across before?

No doubt about it, she was addicting. Her presence, her blood, her mystery. I'd never admit it, but she was allowed to hang around me as long as she wanted.
That Understanding We Have

I awoke to the sound of pecking on my window and cursed the Gods for letting a measly bird be the cause of my interrupted nap. Sure it was well into nighttime, but I had to take my sleep where I could get it. Getting up, I moved to the window to get a glance at this audacious bird. It was a large crow, other than its size and creepy way it was watching my every move, his eyes were also a bit of a startling factor. They were blue, I'm pretty sure crows didn't have blue eyes, that they couldn't. Yet here this beast was, looking just like a cocky Damon down to the shade of those eyes. Salvatore... A new thought erupted inside of me, somehow, this bird was connected to him, there was no way I could continue to believe in coincidence with all I'd seen. Looking back on the precious little I thought knew about vampires, shape-shifting was out, this was not physically Damon outside of my window. Mentally though, that was a cloth of a whole different color. I remember reading something about the bond between vampire and familiar allowing the vampire to see through the familiar's eyes. That perv. The was creeping on me via crow. Taking a risk, I opened the window, crow in my crosshairs.

"You know crow, I wonder if vampires are able to just enter your house at will or if they're subject to being invited in? Because if the latter is the case Damon's never getting in here. Ever." The crow cawed loudly at this. Probably upset. "Just kidding." I looked the crow straight in the eye and said, "Damon, wherever you are, you're invited into my house. Won't you please come in?"

Then I closed the window and pulled the blinds, making my way to the kitchen to start dinner. Not even five minutes later, Damon appeared on a stool behind me.

"How'd you know it was me?"

"Lucky guess." I smirked. He just shook his head.

"You are one brave human." he complimented, I guess.

"Not really," I sighed, "when I was young, that's when I was brave. Now? Now I'm just here. Purposeless." He didn't have anything to say to that.

"Why did you invite me in?"

"I trust you." I said after a moment. His eyebrows turned down.
"You shouldn't." He growled.

"Let me rephrase. I don't trust that you'll save my life if somehow the situation could end badly for yourself. I do trust that you won't kill me yourself without a reason, thus, I have no problem inviting you into my home." He seemed to consider that. "Damon, you and I are on the same page. I may be on your team, but I'm on my team first and foremost. And since apparently I, and the rest of the world, can just enter your home whenever the urge strikes, I figured I would be nice and even the playing field." He nodded, slowly. "So what we're you up to the rest of the day?" I asked.

"Well, Stefan didn't want to give me my ring back after the civil cellphone message I gave him. So I gave him a different message, one written in blood."

"And who were the unfortunate parties this time around?"

"All the druggies that hang out in the clearing." Oh no, Jeremy. "Except not the Gilbert kid, he wasn't there this time." Thank the Gods. "That one girl, strong jaw, nice lips, she just keeps popping up, but I think I got her good this time."

"That's too bad, Matt's a good kid, he won't be the same when he finds out his sister had another run in with the wild animal."

"You aren't taking this like I thought you would."

"And just how was I supposed to take it?"

"Yelling and screaming about how bad it is to take lives. Maybe a little pale because of the nonchalance I emit when I'm talking about death."

"I don't see why you'd want that to happen. The only situation where I may turn into that person is if you mess with Baby Gilbert. He's mine."

"Gotcha. I didn't know you were into cradle robbing."

"He reminds me of my brother. Kill him and it's on. Anyways, about that whole death thing, I have
no doubt that you've been the cause of way more deaths than I, but I'm not a stranger to it. And your diet? Aren't you supposed to drink human blood? What are you supposed to do, live off of bunny blood? Lame! Going against your nature is repressive and dangerous to your health, not to mention everyone around you. Not that you care about them.” I amended.

"Is it possible for you to explain this to Stefan? He just doesn't get it." He said, shaking his head and looking at me incredulously.

"Not without blowing my cover."

"Well later then. What's this about killing people, huh? Are you a serial killer? Is that why you're so comfortable around me?"

"Um. No. Just because I've killed does not make me a serial killer. It was out of necessity. Someone had to do it. It was a long time ago nevertheless."

"You keep a lot of secrets locked up tight in that pretty little head of yours. Tell me more of them. Why are you so mysterious?"

"Damon, don't you realize that you've learned more about me in the last day than anyone else in the last decade? This doesn't happen. I make a real effort not to make friends. There's something wrong with this town. There's something in the water. You're not getting anything else out of me Salvatore."

"We aren't friends." He said quickly and sharply. I chuckled humorlessly.

"Don't kid yourself Damie, we share secrets, we engage in witty banter, I gave you some of my life force. We aren't enemies, so that leaves us at friends. Don't fight it. You really can't win."

DPOV

"Where have you been?" Asked a voice coming from the darkened corner of the sitting room. Some people are just so dramatic. I ignored it for the time being, more interested in pouring myself a glass or two of Scotch. "Damon." Called that voice again, tired irritation clearly present.
"Oh Steffie, I didn't see you there. How was your day? I'm sure the car wash was exciting."

"I'm sure my day wasn't nearly as exciting as yours. How did you manage to escape?"

"You're right, my day had to have been more exciting. I called Caroline to come get me. You know Caroline, blonde, quite ditzy, pretty tasty as well. Well she came, but right as she was about to completely open the door, our beloved, meddlesome nephew appeared. Almost messed everything up too. Good thing his neck was so close to the bars..." I trailed off suggestively.

"You killed Zach?! Damon, he was the last of our family! How could you." Stefan was freaking out pacing, running his hands haphazardly through his superhero hair. So that's how he got it that way. It was interesting to know that his guilt was the reason for his hairstyle, I always thought it was the gel. Good to know.

"Well what can I say? " I took another sip of my drink, shrugging. "When Damon's ring gets taken and hidden by his little brother, heads will roll." Now that I was no longer driven by my thirst and could think clearly, I was glad Gemma had stopped me from ending our bloodline. But I'd let Stefan stew in guilt nice and long. "Oh before I forget, I left you a little present. Out in that clearing, you know, where all the undesirables hang out. I cleaned up most of it, but you might want to get there before the firetrucks." He sped out of the house. "And I want my ring back!" I yelled after him.

It was the next day, and the sun was shining oh-so-brightly, but of course I couldn't enjoy it since Stefan still hadn't returned my daylight ring! And to top it all off, that girl Vicky was still alive. Oh well. I was getting so irritated, and bored. There was nothing to do, no lives to wreck. But wait, yes, there was one more thing I could do while I waited. Vicky. I had taken her blood plenty of times, I could call her down her and we could have some fun. That girl knew how to party.

Several drinks, a blood exchange, and a broken neck later, I was bored again, waiting for Vicky to wake up into her new life as a vampire. I was interrupted from my thoughts by my ringing phone. The caller ID read 'Ruby.' I was pretty sure that I didn't know any Rubys, at least any that would still be alive. Ruby, ruby, ruby, Is a gem. Gem. Gemma. That sly vixen. When did she even get a hold of my phone?

"Damon Salvatore's fantasy hotline, you imagine it, I make it happen." I answered, smirking.

"Cute." She replied sourly. "I assume that since I'm not seeing you at the bar, Stefan hasn't given you your ring back."
"Aw, that fact that you're using your break to call me makes me feel so warm and fuzzy inside."

"Damon..." she started, warningly.

"You assumed correctly. But don't worry, I made a new friend, so I wouldn't be bored while I can't see you."

"Should I be worried?"

"Not particularly. Turns out Vicky Donovan wasn't dead." She let out a surprised noise. "So I persuaded her to come visit me. And... now she's dead again."

"Of course. Well, that would explain why she didn't come into work today. So now what? You're waiting for her to wake up and turn into a zombie?" I could almost hear her eyes rolling.

"Not a zombie. A vampire, like me. Don't you know how vamps are made?"

"Well, now I do. Anyway, my break's over, have fun with your baby vamp. I'm sure she'll be a riot."

"I'm sure she won't be as great as you. And I would invite you over, except she might be a little overzealous the first couple of months. Actually, what the heck, come on over after work, it'll be fine."

"Yes. I'm going to pass on that. And I foresee that this whole plan of yours is going to end... not as you expected." Well that was cryptic.

"What? You mean with Vicky?"

"Not only her, I mean the whole thing. The big plan that you have somewhere in your manipulative brain."
"I'm not sure if that was a complement or not, but, would you care to elaborate on that?"

"Nope, that's all I have for you right now."

"I feel like I keep asking you this question, and you keep side-stepping it. What are you?"

"You're completely right. See you later Damon." And she hung up. Without answering my question. Again. It made me wonder if she'd ever answer me. But I'd be lying if I said I didn't enjoy the excitement it brought to the table. Every other woman I ran into over the years was so easy, so ready to please me. Not Katherine, and not her. I couldn't get a straight answer out of either of them, but with Gemma there was no sinister undercurrent like with Katherine. But that didn't matter, I waited all this time to save Katherine from the tomb, Gemma would be a nice distraction while I waited, but in the end, I was here for one Katherine Pierce. I was roused from my thoughts by some movement from Vicky. Heavy thoughts aside, it was time for some fun.

"So I hear from Jeremy that Vicky ran away." I told Damon when he popped in for a drink. It had been a few days since our last conversation. "He was very calm about it, at peace really. Very unlike how a real boy would act given that his first love ran away." I added. Yes. I was suspicious of Damon for tampering with Jeremy's mind. But I couldn't prove it.

"Is that so?" He replied, sipping his drink and feigning innocence.

"Yes, and the night of the Halloween dance at the high school. Quite an auspicious occasion for such a disappearance, oh, I meant what a day to pick for traveling." I found it hard to keep my smile hidden at my purposeful slip of tongue.

"Of course you did. You know, I don't know what to think of you, Gemma."

"Who said you should be thinking about me, Damon." I mocked.

"You have insight on things that by all means you shouldn't know about. You say cryptic things all of the time. If I didn't know any better, I'd say you were a witch." He continued as if I hadn't even spoken.

"And you would know all about witches, wouldn't you?"
"There you go again. I don't know if I should kill you, or keep you."

"You know, I never was pleased with the idea of being a kept woman after marriage."

"Hah, like anyone would want to marry a bitter bartender like you." He joked.

DPOV

"I was married once..." she said, quietly, dreamlike in quality. A glance to her face showed me that her eyes were glazed, like she was recalling something from her past. "I had other suitors, they would have made sure I was kept. Kept occupied, kept quiet, kept in a woman's place." She paused, still looking into the past. I decided that this was the most straightforward and forthcoming she'd ever been, so I made sure not to distract her. Even going so far as to glare at the other customers that may have succeeded in breaking her out of her trace by requesting a refill. "But not him. He was exciting, and forbidden, and the only one I wanted. The only one I've ever wanted."

I saw how she ran her thumb across her left ring finger, caressing it almost, and I noticed a small tattoo that ran around the finger I had never noticed before. It was a series of interlocking rings connected to what seemed to be a name, but because of her position across the bar, and the position of her thumb, I could only make out one letter, K. She snapped out of the past soon enough, going back to cleaning glasses. I decided to try my luck and ask a few questions before she shut down on me.

"So, what happened to Prince Charming then?"

"What happens to anyone?" She asked rhetorically, sadly. "They die." I could see by the way that her eyes hardened that she was done talking about herself for the day. What I didn't see was her targets refocusing on me. "You'd know all about that, Damon, wouldn't you? Or perhaps not. You told me that Katherine died in a fire, as I'm sure you tell anyone that asks, but I'm not so sure that's how it happened."

"And what would you know about my life?" I said, not comfortable with how right she was.

"I would know the difference between losing someone forever, and losing them for just a little while. You, sir, have the look of a man that tired of waiting, but still hopeful. You, Damon, are pining. Which means you have lost someone, but there's still a chance that you'll meet them again. So, that being said, is there any story you've told me that you'd like to edit?" I didn't know what to think. I knew she was intuitive. I knew that she knew more that she let on. But I didn't know how
close she would get to knowing the truth without me telling her. I took a moment to gather my thoughts.

Sure it was hard knowing that she was ghosting near my closest kept secrets, but it didn't altogether feel wrong. I weighed the pros and cons of telling her the truth, the whole truth, before my plan even came to fruition. Before I even knew more about her and her allegiances. I didn't find many cons at all.

"You're right. I have been waiting for someone."

"And how long have you been waiting for her?"

"Only 145 years." She let out a low whistle.

"Not quite a little while, but definitely much shorter than forever."

"I guess." I managed to bark out a humorless laugh. Another pause. "I'll tell you. The real story. But not here, I'll meet you Friday, after work, at your place." I drank to the dregs of my glass and got up. "Thanks for the drink." I said as I left.

"By the way," she called, I stopped to listen but didn't turn around, "I wasn't always a bartender, and I wasn't always bitter. That's a relatively new development." That last part was murmured, but I still picked up on it.

As I recalled our conversation later on in the day, I remembered the phrases she'd used. Plenty of girls during this period didn't know what a kept woman was, but she did. And a 'woman's place?' That was really old school. Seems dear Gemma had a few things to answer for as well.
That Big Musical Number Chapter

Chapter Notes

So, when I'm writing my stories, they play out like a movie or whatever in my mind. And I just love musicals... Doesn't mean that this "episode" if you will, will be in musical form, but I do love when characters are put in a position where they amaze everybody with a talent that no one knew they had. So ladies and gents, get ready to have your mind blown. Or not, I don't know what floats your boat. And as a reminder, I don't own anything at all except the situations. And if from this point on you could imagine that every song sung belongs to/ was written by the person singing it, unless otherwise noted, that would be awesome possum.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The manager of the Mystic Grille decided that it was time to class-up the local bar/hangout spot. And what better way than to hire live entertainment? I wasn't sold on the whole live band every Friday thing, but I was a bartender, not a performer, so as long as the manager didn't add anything to my job description and I didn't have to do anything extra on those nights, I was fine with it. Besides, knowing the attitudes of the townsfolk, this idea had a good chance of becoming a Mystic Falls version of American Idol, complete with funnily rude remarks courtesy of a roomful of Simons. It could turn out to be entertaining.

The group booked for tonight was some sort of Indie band from a few towns over. More than likely they were a bunch of stoner teenagers looking to capitalize on a unknown bar looking for unknown talent. It was whatever, I just stood behind the bar, participating in my favorite pastime of cleaning glasses. I found that the more I had my hands busy, the fewer people will ask for anything. Well, people other than Damon. He would still tell you to bring him a bottle of bourbon if you were bleeding out, dying on the floor. And speak of the Devil...

"Bar-keep!" That blue-eyed Devil called, slapping his hand on the table. "A glass of your finest bourbon and keep it coming." He smirked at me, knowing I hated it when people called me anything but my name. Actually, I'd rather if people didn't call me at all. I sighed, setting down the glass I had been polishing in front of him, reaching under the bar for his favorite drink.

"Don't call me that, Damon." I said, pouring him a glass.

"How about Bar-Temptress instead?" I just glared. "Anyway, make that two glasses. I have an...acquaintance meeting me here." I quirked my eyebrow as I reached for another tumbler.
"What? Damon, you're bringing your lady friends around me now? I think we skipped a few steps in our relationship."

"Oh please, with where we're at in our relationship I should be seeing a lot more skin." He leered at me. All I could do was roll my eyes. "But, unfortunately no, this is a male -"

"I knew you were to good to be true. You had to bat for the other team." I covered my heart with my hand, and fluttered my eyelashes dramatically. It took him a while to understand my insinuation, but when he did, his eyes widened comically and he spluttered, choking on his drink. I couldn't stop my small smile from forming at his expense.

"What? No, no, no, no. I am not gay. I like women, and breasts. Women, not men." He said again.

"Uh-huh." I nodded condescendingly, disbelievingly.

"But I'm not!" He denied fervently.

"I'm surprised no one has said that to you sooner." Added a new voice. It was a handsome man, ruggedly so, with what seemed to be a permanent five o'clock shadow and warm, but serious, brown eyes. I had seen him around before, but we had never been introduced. His name slipped my mind. He sat down in front of the second glass of bourbon. "What with all the hair product you use." He said, jokingly. Damon scowled.

"This perfection," he gestured to his hair, "is achieved naturally, thank you."

"And there you go again." I said, raising my eyebrows knowingly. "But I can dig it. You two make a cute couple."

"I just can't win." Damon grumbled into his glass. When he finally resurfaced from the now empty glass, which I just as quickly refilled, he decided that it was time for introductions. "Gemma, this is my platonic drinking buddy-

"Associate" the man interjected, "we aren't friends, I don't even like him."
"-Alaric Saltzman." Damon finished without missing a beat, gesturing to the man to the left of him. "Ric, this lovely vixen is Gemma, my absolute favorite bartender. No last name, just like Cher." Alaric extended his hand toward me, I accepted it with my own.

"Call me Ric." He said. I nodded. Now I remembered, Jeremy had talked to me about him before. He said that in order to get the new history teacher off his back, he introduced his aunt Jenna to him. Apparently, it worked too well. They were now dating.

"As long as you promise not to give me any nicknames. At all." I shot a glare at Damon, who just smiled smugly at me.

"That I can do." He chuckled.

"So, my fiery butterfly," I guess Damon was talking to me, "what's supposed to happen tonight? I heard all the teenagers were in a tizzy about some so called talent coming down to the Grill."

"Yeah, there's supposed be a band here," I looked at my watch which read 8:05, "five minutes ago. It's new thing we're trying out. Doesn't seem to be working. Too bad, I was looking forward to a laugh." I replied blandly, spotting a customer down the bar aways needing a refill. I was down there for a while, trying to escape meaningless small talk from the handsy customer, before making my way back to fill Damon's and Ric's glasses.

I spotted Caroline coming up to the bar, a bright smile on her face.

"Hey Gem." I grimaced slightly at the name, but nodded in acknowledgment. She turned looking at Ric. "Hey Ric," he nodded his hello as well. When she looked over at Damon, he smiled and fluttered his fingers annoyingly. "Damon." She spit his name out like a curse and her face puckered for a second.

"Oh, Caroline," he dragged her name out, "don't be like that." Caroline gave him a look that said "drop-dead," which was hilarious for me to have the pleasure of observing, before turning back to me.

"Gem, what's going on with the entertainment? I was promised an awesome performance." She rattled out, exasperated.
"Not sure what to tell you Blondie," I replied, Damon's eyebrows quirked, then relaxed just as quickly as I said this, "whoever that's supposed to be here is late and that's all I know about it." I shrugged. I noticed the boss trying to get my attention from his office door in the shadows behind the bar. "But, my boss wants to talk now, so maybe he knows something. Hold on." I walked to the back to talk to the balding, pudgy, sweaty man. "So I've got some customers complaining about the act not being here."

"Yes, about that." the nervous man started, tugging at his tie. "They were on their way, but they got a flat, they're waiting for the tow truck now. They'll be here as soon as possible, but until then we need someone to go on. The natives are getting restless."

"I agree." I nodded slightly.

"So.." He looked pointedly at me.

"What do you want me to do about it? I'm a bartender, not a bar-tainer."

"I don't know Gemma, I just need you to go out there and stall until they get here. Tell a joke, tell a story, dance, I don't know just keep them entertained for a while."

"That is not in my job description." I replied.

"Actually, it says you'll do any more responsibilities asked by management. So I'm asking you to do this."

"Well, you have me there." I said sourly, irritation flooding through my system. "Fine. Put the piano out, and a mic on top." I stomped back to the three I left, still scowling.

"Well, you don't look too happy." Damon said, stating the obvious. "Did you finally fire you for over-intoxicating customers?"

"I wish." I groused, untying my apron. "Well," I said turning to Caroline, "the act is on their way, running late because of a bloody flat."
"Well, what are we supposed to do until then?" She whined.

"Never fear, a temp act has been hired." I threw my apron under the bar, and let my hair out of its bun.

"Let me guess." said Damon, "you?"

"Wow, you're so smart." I bit back sarcastically. Caroline squealed.

"This is so exciting!" She sang, "I can't wait to tell everybody." She was literally bouncing in place, until she skipped off to her table of friends that included both Gilberts and the other Salvatore.

"Whatever."

"Well, break a leg." Encouraged Ric.

"If only." I replied, lamely, walking to the stage as if it was the gallows.

The piano was set up, mic steady on top, the stage light was unnecessarily bright, which I quickly corrected by glaring at the light technician and gesturing to the overhead light. He dimmed it until it was just barely casting a glow over me. The bar had begun to quiet down, but they weren't quite there yet, so I began playing softly, warming up, scales first, transitioning into some classical piece I learned long ago and just as quickly forgot the name. It was finally silent and I leaned the mic toward me. Still playing softly, I began to speak.

"So, hey everyone. Hopefully, you all are having a good night. I was having a fine one until I was forced-" my train of thought was severed by an abrupt clearing of the throat by my boss that was on the side of the stage. I just narrowed my eyes at him. "Anyway, the group that was scheduled to play tonight is on the way, they're are just running a little late. So I am here to fill in while you wait for them."

"Play 1000 miles!" Yelled some overly enthusiastic female toward the front of the stage.

"I do not take requests." I said sharply, ignoring my bosses attempts at silencing me. "I will play a
song or two of my own, and you will sit there and listen to them. Understood?” I heard a low chuckle, and I zeroed in on the owner of it. None other than Damon, I glared daggers at him and he just shrugged innocently. Innocent my arse. I changed my tune to something low, sultry, complex with a slow tempo.

"I've seen the world, done it all, had my cake now

Diamonds, brilliant, and Bel Air now,

Hot summer nights, mid July,

When you and I were forever wild

The crazy days, city lights

The way you'd play with me like a child."

I had been focused on my singing and playing, but I finally looked up at the audience to see their response. The people in front were properly enthralled. Caroline, I saw next, she was smiling hard, stars shining in her eyes. All I could do was shake my head.

"Will you still love me when I'm no longer young and beautiful?

Will you still love me when I got nothing but my aching soul?

I know you will, I know you will, I know that you will,

Will you still love me when I'm no longer beautiful?"

I had been scanning the crowd from underneath my eyelashes, and I finally made it to the other side of the room where Damon and Ric sat. Ric looked thoroughly impressed. And Damon, well, if his slack jaw and glazed eyes were any indicator, he was pretty impressed too.

"I've seen the world, lit it up as my stage now

Channeling angels in, the new age now

Hot summer days, rock 'n' roll

The way you play for me at your show

And all the ways I got to know your pretty face and electric soul."

I closed my eyes, getting into the song. When I wrote the song it was meant as equal parts hope, and joke. Joke because I would always be young apparently, hope because even though I said I
would never love after Kartik, I guess there was a piece of me that hoped for a new everlasting love.

"Will you still love me when I'm no longer young and beautiful?
Will you still love me when I got nothing but my aching soul?
I know you will, I know you will, I know that you will,
Will you still love me when I'm no longer beautiful?"

I opened up my eyes again when I got to the bridge.

"Dear lord, when I get to heaven
Please let me bring my man
When he comes tell me that you'll let him in
Father tell me if you can
Oh that grace, oh that body
Oh that face makes me wanna party
He's my sun, he makes me shine like diamonds.

Will you still love me when I'm no longer young and beautiful?
Will you still love me when I got nothing but my aching soul?
I know you will, I know you will, I know that you will
Will you still love me when I'm no longer beautiful?
Will you still love me when I'm no longer beautiful?
Will you still love me when I'm not young and beautiful?"

I let that last note linger, but noticing a keep going gesture from my boss, I continued to play, transitioning it into something softer, lighter, tinkling almost.

"Heart beats fast
Colors and promises
How to be brave?
How can I love when I'm afraid to fall?
But watching you stand alone,
All of my doubt suddenly goes away somehow.

One step closer...

I have died everyday waiting for you
Darling, don't be afraid I have loved you
For a thousand years
I'll love you for a thousand more"

I glanced around the room, some people were swaying to the music, normal dinner chatter had started up again. I wasn't upset by it, but what did catch me off guard was Damon's brother. He was staring intently, calculatingly at something, someone, across the room. I followed his line of sight and saw that it was Damon who was his target. Damon who was still looking at me, but had ceased his drooling. In fact, he was looking at me calculatingly too. Weird, must be a Salvatore brother thing.

"Time stands still
Beauty in all she is
I will be brave
I will not let anything take away
What's standing in front of me
Every breath, every hour has come to this

One step closer...

I have died everyday waiting for you
Darling, don't be afraid I have loved you
For a thousand years
I'll love you for a thousand more

And all along I believed I would find you
Time has brought your heart to me
I have loved you for a thousand years
I'll love you for a thousand more

One step closer...
One step closer...

I have died everyday waiting for you
Darling don't be afraid I have loved you
For a thousand years
I'll love you for a thousand more.

And all along I believed I would find you
Time has brought your heart to me
I have loved you for a thousand years
I'll love you for a thousand more.”

I finished the song up, still playing the keys gently, looking over at my boss to see if I could finally leave. Unfortunately, he wanted me to play one more song. The band was here, but they needed a few minutes to set up. I was so demanding a bonus for this. "Okay guys, one last song. You might recognize this one, *Never Let me Go* by Florence and the Machine. Feel free to sing along." I started playing the melody.

"Looking up from underneath
Fractured moonlight on the sea
Reflections still look the same to me
As before I went under
And it's peaceful in the deep
Cathedral where you cannot breathe
No need to pray, no need to speak
Now I am under all

And it's breaking over me
A thousand miles down to the sea bed
Found the place to rest my head
Never let me go
Never let me go
Never let me go
Never let me go

I guess while I was focused on me, the band had started setting up behind me, and the drummer joined me on the verse. I nodded at him.

"And the arms of the ocean are carrying me
And all this devotion was rushing out of me
In the crushes of heaven for a sinner like me
But the arms of the ocean delivered me

Though the pressure's hard to take
It's the only way I can escape
It seems a heavy choice to make
And now I am under all

And it's breaking over me
A thousand miles down to the sea bed
Found the place to rest my head
Once again the drummer joined in, and this time with the bass player. I think I even heard some of the audience start to sing.

"And the arms of the ocean are carrying me
And all this devotion was rushing out of me
In the crushes of heaven for a sinner like me
But the arms of the ocean delivered me

And it's over
And I'm going under
But I'm not giving up
I'm just giving in

I'm slipping underneath
So cold and so sweet

And the arms of the ocean so sweet and so cold
And all this devotion I never knew at all
In the crushes of heaven for a sinner released
And the arms of the ocean delivered me

Never let me go
Never let me go
Never let me go
Never let me go
Deliver me
Never let me go
Never let me go
Never let me go
Never let me go
Never let me go
Deliver me
Never let me go
Never let me go
Never let me go
Never let me go
Never let me go
Never let me go

And it's over
(Never let me go, Never let me go)
And I'm going under
(Never let me go, Never let me go)
But I'm not giving up
(Never let me go, Never let me go)
I'm just giving in
(Never let me go, Never let me go)

I'm slipping underneath
(Never let me go, Never let me go)
So cold and so sweet
(Never let me go, Never let me go)"
I finished playing, and stood up from the bench, cracking my shoulders. I leaned back down so I could talk into the mic.

"Okay, I'm finally done." Applause exploded at that. When it died down I continued. "Thanks," I chuckled, "And I know present to you "MouseRat!" I lazily made my way off the stage, walking back behind the bar, putting my apron back on.

"My, my, my, Red. You've been holding out on me." Damon's voice dripped into my ear like smooth toffee. I turned to face him. He had a new look in his eyes, it was deeper than the normal flirty one he had, and I wasn't sure if I wanted to see it there or not. "Why didn't I know there was a sultry cabaret singer hiding in plain sight?" He questioned me.

"You just don't seem to ask the right questions, Damon. I'm an open book." For the most part.

"Yeah," he scoffed, "if the book's an incomplete mystery."

"Har har." I replied, with only the slightest bit of humor, so basically undetectable.

"That was great, Gemma." Chimed Ric, giving Damon a strange look.

"Thanks Ric. I do what I can."

Chapter End Notes

The first song was Young and Beautiful by Lana Del Rey, and the second was 1000 Years by Christina Perri, and ze third was mentioned in the story. Andddd, I'm still not satisfied. Now, I kinda want to put Gemma in a sitch where there's a pole involved and a distraction needed. Maybe later. ;)
"Who are you Gemma? Who are you really?" He asked me later on that night as we sat on my couch, a bottle or two of wine shared between us. Well, the wine was really all mine. He had found my stash of hard liquor and helped himself. "I've told you about me. About everything, Katherine, Stefan, why I'm here. I haven't even told Stefan why I'm here yet. And I'm still not sure why I told you, something inside of me is telling me to trust you, even though for most of my life I've never trusted most people with anything more than my name. I don't know anything about you really. You speak in riddles, I don't even know your last name!" His voice escalated until he was yelling. "Just tell me." He requested, much calmer now. "I've been asking what you are, but please, just tell me who you are. Maybe that's the better question." If someone had told me that my choice to come to Mystic Falls, Virginia would lead me to finding someone I could tell to the whole truth of who I was, I would've believed them.

I would've believed them because magic and premonitions have very much been a large part of my life since my sixteenth birthday, so who was I to discount what someone else had seen about my life? Hell, if I had just listened to Mother Elena of the Gypsies all those years, ago, I probably wouldn't even be in this position. And if that person had told me this, I never would've come here. I would've avoided this place like the plague, because living for an eternity is much easier when you're doing it alone and there isn't anyone to give you heartbreak, or die on you. Because those kinds of hurts would stay with you for the rest of your life. For forever. So yes, it was hard for me to open up to this man, this vampire I called my friend, because one, I hadn't had friends for a very long time, and two, friends have the most potential for damage if they turn into enemies. But, I decided to tell him the truth, knowing that he felt the same about this that I did and that we would be on level playing ground once I showed him all of my cards. I guess had been alone long enough.

"This is a very complex story, so please leave all your questions until the end." I started, taking a deep breath. "When I was sixteen, I saw my mother die."

"That's not that complex." He said, interrupting my thoughts.

"Maybe not to you, but if you would allow me to continue, you'll be able to figure out what's so different about her death." I gave him a look, and when he nodded, I continued. "We were in India at the time, in a market place. I told you, I'd lived there for most of my life until I went off to finishing school. It was my birthday, and I was angry at mother, I had been arguing with her nonstop. Stupid teenager problems. I was being a ninny, and I didn't want to look at her anymore, so I ran away, through the market place. I had no idea where I was going. And then I saw her being stabbed by a man that she knew. Mind you, I was across town at this point. I was having a vision." I held up a finger to stop Damon from speaking again.

"I know what you're going to ask. No, I am not a witch. I've met witches, researched witches. My visions, while still magical, were different from what witches do. Witches are bound to the earth,
nature, bound to their bloodline, their ancestry. I don't have those types of shackles on what I can do. And it's not black magic, it's not expression, it just is. Anyway, in the vision I had seen my mother being stabbed by this man, and the man had been consumed by some evil entity. I ran back to the place that I left my mother, hoping to be able to stop this horrible thing from occurring, but I was too late, too far away, and when I found her, I found her in a pool of her own blood. I mourned for a few months, then was shipped to England to go to school, where I uncovered a cult of women who practiced magic inside a place called the realms.

"I'm still not so sure about this," I continued, "but I assume that the realms are a sort of alternate dimension or something where what I can only guess are the fae reside, it may even be the crossroads between here and the afterlife. I met plenty of corrupt souls there that never crossed over. Even helped a few lost souls across. There's magic there, and I found that by staying there for a few hours, I could take some of the magic back into the this world with me. It could do anything, the magic, but it was impermanent, whatever I did only lasted for several hours, a day at the most." A pause to gather my thoughts. "Later I found out that my mother had been working with the man that stabbed her, against this dark entity, controlled by a woman called Circe. The only way to save her, was to kill her before she was consumed by it. A lot happened over the year or two I was in England, at that academy. I beat Circe, I thought I'd killed her, unfortunately I only imprisoned her, but it was enough because I rendered her useless. That magic that was in the realms though, it was contained in these jewels, and only people like me, humans, and then eventually only me, were able to draw from the power. That left the creatures of the realms magic-less, they didn't like that, they pleaded with me to release the magic, and I agreed to. But at first I didn't know how.

"Then when I did know how, I wasn't sure what to do with it, and I may also have been a bit selfish, because when I broke the jewels that held all of the power, I kept the power to myself. And for months, I kept that power. And it boiled under my skin, bubbling in my veins, wanting, waiting to be used. But I didn't use it, because I had found that once when I tried, I would see a frightening image of Circe, my first foe, like it was burned into the back of my eyelids. The magic didn't like not being used though. It made me ill. Ill in body, ill in mind. And though I thought the struggle for power in the realms was over when I knocked Circe out of the race, I realized that she wasn't the big bad at all. There was a more powerful enemy that fed off of violence and anger, the literal root of all things evil. So there was a war, and then I died. But I was given a choice to come back and fight, to finish it once and for all. So I did. And I fought with my friends, with my love. And in the end, we won. But I lost him forever. And then I did the right thing, I bound the magic that had been in my body, that I had stolen from the realms, to the land, equally, so that everyone could share it. And then I left.

"And I didn't go back for ten years, and only then because I needed counsel from the creatures that lived there, because some strange things were happening. The magic, it was still in me, and when I used it, it was no longer on a time limit. Everything I made became permanent...real." Noticing that I was coming to the end of my story, Damon chanced a question.

"So what are you? Twenty-six, twenty-seven? Just judging from the timeline of your story." He inquired
"I didn't even get to the best part of my story yet, Damon. I was twenty-eight when I went back to the realms to ask them some questions. The strangest thing that happened? I stopped aging when I was twenty-two. They called it 'accidental immortality.'" His eyebrows shot up.

"That's impossible." He cried out. "You? Immortal? As in around, forever? But still human? The man upstairs has got to be fuckin' with me right now." He ran his fingers through his hair. "So, how old are you then?"

"Going with my age of twenty-eight, which is what it says on my driver's license, I find it to be quite the coincidence that I too have been this age for 145 years."

"Born in-"

"1836"

"This gives 'respect your elders' a whole new meaning." He paused, looking as if he didn't know how to ask his next question.

"Just ask!" I urged.

"You said that you were in love, and that your lover died." It brought a frown to my face, but I nodded. "Who was he, and what does he have to do with your tattoo?"

"So you noticed that did you?" I said, absently rubbing my ring finger before showing it to him. "His name was Kartik, that's what's tattooed there. He was Indian, and for a proper English girl as I was back then, he was completely off limits. He sacrificed his life for mine, and I use to dream of him. I thought the dreams meant that we'd meet again, in the afterlife. That he was waiting for me. And while that may be the case for him, while he may still be waiting for me, it doesn't seem that I'll be making it anytime soon."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I thought I'd just bide my time, I left England to go to University, to give my family something to be proud of. I would never had been able to be that high society girl. It was never in the cards for me. I was planning on living a lonely life, I was ready to die. I was waiting to get old and die. But then I stopped aging. After I confirmed this, I tried to kill myself. And nothing
worked. They told me that I'd never have the choice of death again." I sighed.

"So if I just snapped your neck, you would just get back up?" He asked, a little too interested.

"Yes. Don't even try anything Damon, keep your hands to yourself. If I thought it would work, I'd let you have a go at it, but alas, I've tried hanging myself, stabbing myself - through the heart, jumping of a cliff, drowning myself - which I must say was the most painful because until I got out of the water I just kept waking up and drowning again, I got hit by a car and ended up waking up in the morgue, I wasn't about to burn myself alive that would be stupid and disfiguring, frostbite is a bitch to deal with but other than falling asleep then waking back up, overexposure to cold does not a thing. I even swiped some drugs from a hospital to induce a heart attack."

"Didn't work?"

"Didn't work. Even if I managed to find a way to experience true death, I'd never make it back to him. He is no longer my endgame."

"That is possibly the saddest thing I've ever heard." And I could tell he was being truthful.

"It is pretty pitiful."

"But at least now you have an immortal friend to hang out with. This brings a whole new meaning to BFFs." He smirked, nudging me, trying to get me into a better mood.

"Yeah until you rescue your vampire girlfriend and go off with her." This sobered him up.

"Before I told you all about Katherine and my plan, you knew. You said it wouldn't work. Why and how?" I shook my head.

"I don't know everything Damon. I don't get visions anymore, only feelings, and these feelings are telling me that everything that you've waiting patiently for all these years, it's not going to end as you'd hoped. You're not going to like it one bit. And it's not your fault. So when the time comes, don't think that."
"I...don't believe you." He got up, rising to his feet.

"And that's fine. Just know that I'll be here when you need me." And with that, he left, only a flash to my eyes.

He showed back up at the bar one evening, several days later. I assumed he was done pondering what I had said last time we'd spoken. He took his normal seat, and I set his chosen poison in front of him. I decided to start out with an olive branch.

"Doyle." I said.

"What?" He asked, confused.

"It's my last name. You ran out so quickly I'd forgotten to tell it to you."

"Hmmm." He looked pensive. "The town has a secret council comprised of a member of each founding family that is aware vampires exist. I have been charged with getting rid of the vampire problem, and working on a way to direct all suspicion away from myself." He finished, low enough so only I could hear him, downing his drink.

"And you thought your extracurricular activities would go unnoticed." I jibed, happy that we were back on friendly enough ground to share secrets.

"So sue me." He griped, widening his eyes. "I haven't been around for quite a few years. I thought the belief in vampires fizzled out after that last purge in 1864. But nooooo, the council was keeping tabs on everything. I have to kill a vampire to even gain trust and entry to their little club. I am an Original Salvatore, we don't get hazed, we do the hazing." He whined and pouted, much like a child.

"So you're looking for ideas to get you in?" He nodded. "Well, if you're feeling Cullen-ish, like the moral road is the way for you, you could find a vampire that is killing for no reason - much like yourself - or just downright evil, bring him to the town and set him up." He looked to be at least thinking about the idea. "Or, you could find a drifter or just plain bad human, change him, let him go free, then kill him...that's all I got."

"I'll admit, those are good ideas, however I have something else that's a-brewing in my mind." He tapped his fingers against his chin villainously. "Today is Stefan's birthday, he's turning 162. I'm
sure his best friend, a vampire I cannot stand, will be coming around to spend the day with him. Like she always does." He said with a sneer. "As the good brother I am, I think I should make sure he gets a surprise he never forgets."

"I think I'm understanding where you're going with this, and while it is an effective way to kill two or three birds with one stone, I don't see this bringing about all around good results. How about you use one of the other plans?" I suggested.

"No can do, Gem. I'm dead set on this one. You working tonight? Want to be my accomplice?" He grinned, both hopeful and conniving.

"Fortunately, I get off at six this evening. But it seems that I also have a plan for tonight. It involves a few bottles of champagne, a bubble bath, several candles, and a steamy romance novel," and also tweaking some things in your plan, "so I am afraid I can't be of any help to you tonight."

"Well that does sound like a good plan, maybe later there could be room for one more in that tub? And we could ditch the book?"

"That's a negative, Mr. Salvatore. Why don't you scooch along now and get things ready for this plan of yours and leave me to my job." I said, rolling my eyes.

"Catch ya on the flip side, Gem." He saluted me as he left.

"You seem to be on good terms with Damon." Said a strangely worry-free Jeremy. He had been this way since the disappearance of Vicky. I had a sneaking suspicion that one of the vampires around town had something to do with this one-eighty Jeremy had pulled. He no longer had the lingering odor of weed on his clothes, the bags under his eyes were gone. Sure it was a good change, no doubt, but it wasn't a natural one. But he was still the Jeremy I liked underneath all that surface crap, so whatever.

"Not really." I said, keeping up my cover. "He just enjoys flirting and the fact that I never cut off his drink supply." He laughed.

"Yeah, I'm sure anyone would enjoy that. As for me, I'm not so sure what to think about him. He gives off some seriously creepy vibes, he's always antagonizing his brother, and sometimes I feel like he's scamming on my sister, but even then I'm not sure if he's being serious or doing it just to piss off Stefan."
"You're right, he is a shady character."

"All that being said, I can see you two as a couple." Had I been drinking something, I would've choked at this revelation.

"Excuse me? I think not. He has some serious issues."

"You're good at fixing people. You helped me out and that was just after one talk. Yeah, I can definitely see it."

"That's it, away with you. Shoo! And don't come back until you're through speaking nonsense."

"Yeah, yeah, Gemma." He chuckled, walking away.
That Mess of Yours I Cleaned Up

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After leaving work for the night, I walked to my apartment, with every intention of heading back out to follow Damon and thwart his sure to be idiotic - and painful for Stefan - plan. So after I took a shower to clean the dirt and grime that seemed to hover behind the bar, I changed onto some clothes that would help me blend in with the crowd that normally frequented the bar, since, according to Damon, whatever that he planned was going to happen there.

I made my way back to the bar and grille, casting my patented notice-me-not illusion like a cloak around me, and slinked into a back corner of the bar, where I could watch all the going-ons in the large room. Soon enough, I saw Stefan Salvatore and his merry band of teenagers come into the building, accompanied by a pretty blonde I was not acquainted with, with whom he was chatting animatedly with. Well, as animated as his brooding forehead would let him be.

I assumed that this was the Lexi, Stefan's vampire best friend that Damon was gunning for in his plot tonight. Stefan looked so happy with her being here. The best birthday surprises I suppose, were the reunions between family and friends, not that I'd known that pleasure for quite some time. I already decided that I was going to interfere with Damon's plan, but the pure content that radiated off of Stefan, and by extension Elena and Lexi, reaffirmed for me that I definitely had to make sure no one had a bad ending, at least for tonight. It was the least I could do. I may not have been all buddy-buddy with Stefan, but if he ever found out that I was behind saving Lexi, I would make sure it counted towards all his birthday presents for the rest of his existence. I mean, friends are forever, unless they're killed...permanently.

I watched as the group of friends gathered around a large table created by smaller tables pushed together. They were singing Happy Birthday to Stefan and everyone's attention was on him. Except Lexi, she moved toward the bar, I was guessing that she had the intent of buying shots for the birthday celebrators. No one noticed her absence. I tracked her to the bar, and saw her waiting for the bartender to notice her. All of the sudden, Damon slinked in and leaned against the bar-top next to her, whispering something in her ear. I watched as Damon sassed something back, I could tell that it was good by the curve of her lips and the slight frown on Damon's face. She was still waiting for the bartender to notice her. All of the sudden, Damon took syringe filled with some type of liquid and stabbed it into Lexi, making her groan in pain then pass out. He caught her, and maneuvered her to the back hallways of the Grille. I got up, following them to the alley behind the Grille seeing that the Sheriff and one of the deputies was waiting for him there.
"Are you sure she's a vampire?"

"Of course." Damon responded, in his usual exasperated tone. "She's new to town, only comes out during the night, seems extremely shady, and if she were human, the vervain wouldn't have affected her like this. She's the one that's been doing the killings. I'm sure of it." I watched as his eyes gleamed in the excitement of having one of his plans work out. He held his hand out to Sheriff Forbes, waiting, I assumed, for her to hand over a stake. Realizing that this plan was about to come to an end and I still wasn't sure how to interfere without making myself known, I started thinking of what I knew about vampires.

They were the undead, the resurrected. They had hearts and heartbeats, just much slower than human beings. I assumed that they could be killed by decapitation or a stake to the heart, which seemed to be the direction Damon was taking.... It was magic that kept them alive in the first place, and I had a bunch of that. If I could channel my power into creating her a new heart, and keeping her body in a state of stasis after she was staked, that would keep the her 'life force' in her body so when her new heart was reunited, she would be as good as new, and I wouldn't have to worry about staging the death of a vampire when I knew nothing of what happened when they died.

Sheriff Forbes handed over the stake, and we watched as Damon plunged the sharpened end into Lexi chest. If she hadn't been such an innocent party, watching him embrace his darker side to finish her off might have been attractive. Alas, this was not the case. Lexi's eyes shot open and her mouth opened in a silent scream. Her back arched up in a painful looking move, well, I guess no more painful than getting a stake through the heart, and black veins started to rippled outwards from the wound on her chest, up her neck, down her arms, anywhere really. Her skin lost all color, other than these impressive veins, and she fell back down against the concrete, dead, her new heart thumps slow and strong in my fist.

Sheriff Forbes looked on in utter revulsion. I guess she had never seen anything as grotesque as supernatural death. Tell me about it, there were few things more terrifying. Damon gave a wicked grin, tossing the stake back to her fumbling hand, dusting off his own as if he'd just done something labor intensive.

"Have one of your guys bury her somewhere in the woods. She won't be anymore trouble." He said, walking away. "I've got myself a ginger to find and celebrate with." That's what you think. I thought. But you're so wrong. On both counts. My sights were now set on the deputies that looked upon the body in slightly less disgust than the female Sheriff. After receiving the orders from her, they packed Lexi's body in their trunk, and drove off. I followed. We ended up in the woods, not far from were I assumed Vicky had been first attacked by Damon. My how cyclic life was. They began to dig, and I pondered the merits of making them forget what they were doing and go on with their lives, or to let them finish. I decided to let them finish, because although I was confident in my powers, I wasn't sure what other sort of supes were out there and whether or not they'd be able to unravel the glamour I had put on the men. Besides, what was a little dirt between friends?
When the men finished, they left, not without throwing a suspicious gaze around the surrounding area. I couldn't blame them, I mean, there were dangerous things out in the woods at night.

I moved the freshly disturbed soil out of the way, and jumped into Lexi's shallow grave, straddling her was the only thing I could do in such a small area, so I did, and then I thrust her new heart into her chest, triggering her essence to attach to it and start working again. She choked on her first intake of air and coughed, bringing her hand up to feel at her chest, which was still wounded.

"What happened?" She rasped. "Who are you?" Not even commenting on my strange position atop her.

"What do you remember happening?" I asked. Her brow furrowed.

"It's Stefan's birthday, I was at the bar..." she thought on it for a second. "Damon," she growled, a fierce expression overtaking the confusion. "He staked me!" He expression then turned to wonder, she was feeling at her chest more fervently. "He staked me, it went through, I was dead, how...?" She said looking at me, wincing and she explored the deep wound in her chest.

"I brought you back." I said, nonchalantly.

"Black magic?" She asked, seeming afraid of my answer.

"Nah, only witches are constrained by the lines of black and white magic...and pulling power from nature..." I replied. It confused her, but the fear was gone.

"So..." she was trying to get an answer about my affinity for magic out of me. Not going to happen. I got off of her, jumping out of the hole. I put my hand out for her to grab.

"I didn't just save you for you to get killed again." I said, as she gingerly made her way out of her grave with my helping hand.

"Damon.." She growled his name.

"Damon thinks you're dead, he thinks it was a good idea to kill you, but I have a feeling that it's
much better for everyone involved for you to be alive."

"I've got a score to settle with him." She said, moving to leave the woods. I stopped her with a hand on her shoulder.

"Listen, he already staked you once. In front of the Sheriff, she knows your face. This town's council is ready for vampires, they have stores of vervain and I'm sure the numbers for a few more vampire hunters when they decide that Damon is ineffective. You go back, still injured," I eyed her wound, "and you bring trouble from higher up, not just on yourself, but on Stefan. And I'm sure you don't want that, right?" She sighed and shook her head. "And Damon, I'm sure you've known him way longer than me, so you have to know that he has issues. He thinks he hates his brother, we know that's not true at all. They've been the only constant in each other's lives... ever. He's just lost, confused, and angry at the wrong person. I can see him levelling out soon. Something big is about to happen."

"What are you, the Damon fan club?"

"No, I'm more like his maid. It's seems like every week I'm cleaning up more of his messes. But, someone has to do it, or else his bad karma would swell to epic proportions affecting everyone around him. I for one, do not want to be a recipient of bad karma."

"I get that. So what do I do now then?"

"Well, I'm assuming that Damon's either looking for me now to gloat, or if he's realized that he's not going to find me, he went to Stefan to tell him all about his day. Stefan will be broken-hearted, and Damon will feel like he's winning. But Lexi, for the greater good, you cannot contact Stefan. Really, not anyone from this town. Don't even go to the house to pick up your stuff. As of an hour ago, you were dead. You need to go home, and when you're there and you see any friends, make sure they know to keep on with this charade of your death if confronted by either Salvatore. Damon's psyche is really delicate at this moment, and if anything changes, several heads are going to roll."

"What you're saying makes sense, but..."

"To tell you the truth, this could be a really good thing. Your hiding." I clarified. "The less people that know about your alive status, the more helpful you are to Stefan if he ever gets in a jam."
"Ok, I get it. I'll leave and stay underground for a while." She looked up to the sky. "I better get a move on before the sun comes out. That would suck after all I've been through." She gave a bitter chuckle. She started to walk away, pausing for a moment. "I never got your name stranger." She said.

"Gemma." I replied.

"Well, Gemma," said, "thank you for saving my life. It seems I owe you a life-debt." Then she sped off.

I put the 'crime scene' back in order, in case a certain dark-haired, sadistic vampire came around looking for proof, then flickered out of existence in the woods, and back into existence in my bathroom. I turned on the faucet, getting the water to a slightly hotter-than-perfect-temperature, before starting to fill the tub with it. I added in a light lavender bubble mixture, and left the room to gather the things I needed to salvage my relaxing night in. A book, a full bathtub, and chilled bottle of champagne later, I stepped out of my clothes and into the water, shivering as the warmth from the water clashed with the chill from the air. I was halfway done with the champagne and the bestselling mystery-thriller when I got a visitor.

"Honey! I'm home!" He yelled from what I assumed was the front door. So it starts. I took a sip of the champagne straight from the bottle, rolling my eyes. I blur of black and the offender was standing in front of me. Had I not been so old, and completely covered my the mass of bubbles in my bath water, I might have blushed.

"Well, well, well," he said, running his eyes over the parts of my body that were exposed, such as my arms, upper chest, neck - which I guess was kind of important for his kind - head, not much really, but he still made it seem quite dirty. "That's a large enough tub to fit two comfortably." He waggled his eyebrows and moved to take off his leather jacket.

"Hold it right there, mister. I don't know what about me trying to enjoy a bath alone makes you think I want to share or have company. Because I can assure you, if I wanted company, I would have it."

"Fiesty Gemma. I like it. Well, if you won't share you're bath with me, the least you can do is hand over the booze. I feel like celebrating!" He grabbed the bottle out of my hand and took a generous swig. And this was my life now.

"So what are we celebrating." I asked, although I already knew.
"The death of a thorn in my side."

"You finally got rid of Stefan." I joked. He laughed heartily, the most uplifted I'd ever seen him.

"Gemma, you're the best. You know that? But no, unfortunately he's phase three, and what happened tonight was phase one. Tonight, I succeeded in killing Stefan's best friend, and securing a permanent spot on the council." He sighed. "Today was a good day. Too bad you missed out. It was a rush." He took another swig.

"Damon, will you ever tire of creating enemies?"

"Father always said you weren't a great man until you had made enemies." His eyes flashed with a dark emotion I didn't have enough time to name.

"Mmmhmm." I replied, noncommittally.

"Besides, it's just Lexi. She was a nobody."

"Unless you are the person, or have done extensive recon on the person, you never know exactly what ties they have to others. She could have left a mate behind. I'd like to think that you've at least had some experience with them, they're quite bothersome no matter the species."

"Seriously, you are harshing my mellow."

"So sorry." I rolled my eyes, gesturing for my bottle back.

"It wasn't strong enough anyway." He grunted giving it back, quickly leaving and reappearing with some Scotch and a tumbler I didn't even know I owned. "It's been a good week." He grinned. "And next week, I know for a fact that it'll be even better." I highly doubted that.

"Damon, promise me something."
"What's with the pensive attitude? This is supposed to be happy time." I just gave him a look. "Fine, what?"

"When all this is over. And you find, maybe not what you've been looking for, but when you find what's there waiting for you, will you promise to take a long hard look at yourself and think of ways to get your good karma levels up?" He burst out laughing.

"I didn't know supernatural creatures believed in karma." He said, still laughing.

"How could I not? It is a form of balance, is it not? And everything in this world has a balancing factor. This is what these witches are most adamant about. And you, sir, have accrued a massive amount of karmic dust around your soul."

"Karmic dust, soul?!" He spluttered. "You're serious, aren't you?" He said, evaluating me. I only nodded.

"Why is it always the crazy ones that are hot?" He whined to himself. "Or maybe she's hot, because she's crazy?" He mused.

"I could say the same about you Damon Salvatore." I smirked.

"Well, you got me there." He chuckled. "But seriously? I'm dead, I have no soul, and by extension, no karmic dust. Whatever that is."

"That's just like saying a caterpillar is not a butterfly, or vice versa. Humans have souls, yes? So why would a vampire, which is just an upgraded, evolved human, not have a soul as well? If you were soulless, your mind would be vacant as well. That is clearly not the case here, in fact, I think you think, and plan, and scheme a little too much."

"You think I'm a butterfly?" He said, half-joking, half-pleadingly serious.

"That was the only thing you caught from that?" He nodded.

"Well then Damon, I truly think that you are the most beautiful, disturbed, damaged, strong,
"courageous butterfly that ever used to be a caterpillar."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. And all the other butterflies have to flutter away when faced with the potential power that is you."

"You know," he said, quietly, "I think I'll keep you around for a little while longer."

"Like you could ever get rid of me anyway. And we're not done talking about the karmic dust." I grumbled, taking a swig of the now room temperature champagne and leaning back in my tub to finish my book, ignoring Damon as he leaned back against my sink contemplating my words.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, that might have been slightly OCC on Damon's part, because while he does fish for compliments and gloat about the horrible things he's done, he's not so forward with his vulnerability, at least at this timeframe in TVD. We definitely see it later on in the show, but I like to think that if Damon had a friend like Gemma, where the relationship was full of shared secrets, he wouldn't mind giving her another secret to keep. Besides, this isn't called That Wicked and Needy Type of Love for no reason. He's just being both the Wicked and Needy portions of the relationship right now. What can I say, Gemma's mostly got her emotional shit taken care of already.

And this is what I do in my free time, psychoanalyze doubly fake relationships, between fake people.

Thanks for the continued support! If anyone's actually reading this on purpose because I seriously don't even know anymore...
"So, you know that guy from the news channel?"

"Oh yes, the one guy from that one news channel! Of course I know exactly who you're talking about." I deadpanned, just looking at Damon.

"Okay, okay, no need to get all pissy on me. I mean Logan Fell, he's on channel four. He's short, he's always looking for airtime, and he gives off this slimy kind of vibe."

"Oh, so like your vibes?" I prodded.

"Ummm, no, not like me." He looked so hurt. It was great. "The vibe I give off is sexy, or charming, or both. Not slimy."

"My bad, I must've gotten the two confused." It was difficult to keep my expression neutral. He just harrumphed.

"Anyway.." he dragged out, "keep your eyes peeled. If you see him around do not engage in communication. And make sure that you're aware of your surroundings at all times. Text me his location. Because as of confirmation last night, Logan Fell is a baby vamp."

"Oh. Scary. What's he gonna do? Esposé me to death?" I asked dryly.

"So the bartender has jokes." He rolled his eyes. "Seriously Gem, baby vamps are the worst. Not that strong compared to their older counterparts, but their control is shit, their blood lust is at an all time high, and predictability is zero."

"I'm sorry, are we talking about you again?" I just couldn't help myself. He only rolled his eyes. "There, there Damon, I was only kidding. I will take your words to heart if I ever cross paths with this Fell character. I'm just pleased that your finally admitting that you care what happens to me. We're a few more steps in on the journey of friendship." I smiled cheesily. He mumbled something. "What was that Damie? I don't have vampire hearing at the moment."
He heaved a great sigh. "I said that I do care."

"Aw. I think you just infected me with the warm fuzzies. You should get out of here before I contract something else from you."

"Whatever." He said walking away. The slight blush on his cheeks matching my own.

"I see that you and Damon are flirting again." Jeremy popped up and started on that track again.

"Baby Gilbert," he frowned at my nickname for him. Success. "You're not on that again are you? That was friendly banter, not to be confused with flirting."

"Just be careful Gem. I heard from Elena that-"

"And by heard, you eavesdropped? Because I know you and your sister are still at a point where you're not having any substantial exchanges of information."

"Okay. So I overheard from one of Elena and Stefan's many conversations, that Damon's still pining for and mourning over his ex-girlfriend Katey? Katty?" Hmmm. Katty, I liked that derivative. "Something, I don't know. Now I know she's dead, and that's like the worst kind of competition, because the dead can do no wrong, but I'm still a firm supporter of Team Demma, so I'm gonna need you to stop this aloof stranger act and just go for it." I was momentarily shocked into silence at his speech.

"One, did you really just ship Damon and I? Because that is so weird on so many levels."

"You don't realize this now Gemma, but you guys are so my OTP."

"OTP?! You've got to get out of the house more often."

"Since you know what that means, I feel like we're in the same boat." He threw back, eyebrows lifted. He had me there.
"Two, my aloofness and mysteriousness is not an act. And three, I already know about his ex. We're friends. But don't go blabbing this around town. Sometimes people need secret friends."

"My lips are sealed." He mimicked zipping up his lips and throwing away the key. I gave him a genuine smile and ruffled his shaggy brown hair.

"So, tell me about school. What's new?" And we embarked on half-hour long conversation about the very few differences between cheerleaders and stoners.

"Why are you calling me?" I whined into the cellphone that had been ringing incessantly for the last five minutes. I tried to just ignore it, but the blanket pulled around my head did little to drown out the noisy little thing. "I wasn't answering for a reason."

"Stop whining Gemma. It's unbecoming for a woman of your age." Snarked Damon. I knew telling him my age would come back to bite me in the bum. "Besides, it's not like you have any friends - other than me - or are busy."

"Well you would know, seeing as how you only have one friend as well. No manners at all. What do you want?" I snapped.

"I need you to help me out..."

"Oh goody. Another half-baked scheme that I'll have the pleasure of assisting with."

"Calm your tits, Gem. I happened to have gained some intel from one of my sources. Jenna is going on a date with Logan tonight."

"Elena."

"-What?"

"She's your super secret intel source."

"Well yeah, but-"
"Just say Elena next time, no need to be cryptic."

"You like to suck the fun out of everything you come in contact with, don't you?"

"It's my favorite pass-time." I drawled.

"Clearly. Like I was saying..." He paused. "..."

"Like you were saying..." I prompted.

"Well, I had to make sure you weren't going to interrupt me again..."

"Oh my God! Spit it out. From one of your sources you gained the information that tonight the dangerous baby vamp is going to take Jenna out to dinner. I am aware that this is dangerous for Jenna, but even more on your radar is a chance to detain, pump for information, and then most probably kill Logan. So what do you want me to do?"

"Thank you so much for volunteering your services." Cue a heavy sigh from yours truly. "I need you to take a shift at the grille tonight. Jenna isn't very receptive to Logan's advances, so they're staying in town. You need to distract Jenna while I lure him out..."

"And how do you suggest I distract Jenna?" I said, rolling my eyes even though he couldn't see the action.

"Use you feminine wiles." I swear I heard a 'duh' in the air on the end of that sentence.

"Feminine wiles don't work on straight women."

"True." He said, considering the next plan of action. "But she's young, still in college. I'm sure she hasn't gotten all the experimentation out of her system yet. Wink a little, show a little cleavage. It'll work."
"Mmhmm. And how is Ric going to feel if I whisk his prospective girlfriend away?"

"Ahhh. He'll get over it."

"You know what. I'll distract her, but on my own terms. Yours are too stupid."

"That hurts Gemma."

"Then it did its job." I replied.

The night came, and I still wasn't sure how I was going to distract Jenna. I figured I'd wing it. Worst come to worst, I would just spill something on Logan who would have to go to the bathroom, leaving Damon to intercept him. I had called Stacy earlier in the day to see if she wanted to switch a shift, thankfully she did. She had another hot date, of course, with some random person who had stopped in the bar a week ago. Whatever. About an hour into my shift, I got a text from Damon alerting me that Jenna and Logan were on their way in. Inconspicuously, I moved a little behind the bar so I would have a clear view of the front door without actually looking at it and being obvious.

Jenna and Logan walked in. I actually had never met Jenna, only saw her around town after I figured out who she was after my talks with Jeremy. Jeremy. That was a great idea. I'd distract her with tales about my talks with Jeremy. Every good guardian likes to hear about their child succeeding in life, or at least not being as depressed as they were before. Anyway, Jenna was not looking happy with the arrangement between her and Logan. Possibly because she didn't want to be on the date in the first place. That just made my job easier.

I let the couple get settled for a while, starting a conversation that only Logan seemed invested in - it was either that, or the promise of her blood, I wasn't sure - before I walked over to the table.

"Excuse me." They both looked up, but I kept my eyes on the prize. "Would you happen to be Jenna Sommers?" I asked, innocently. She looked surprised, but she still smiled.

"Um. Yes that's me. May I ask who you are?"

"Oh of course. How rude of me. I'm Gemma." I held my hand out for her to shake, which she did. "I work at the bar." Gesturing to the "Mystic Grille" embroidered on my black work polo.
"Nice to meet you Gemma. Come to think of it, I have seen you around town lately."

"Yes, I actually moved here several months back. As small as this town is, there are a lot of people. It's not strange that we haven't met already. But, I must apologize again, you don't even know why I'm over here." I said. She shook her head in a polite 'no'. "Well since I've been working here, I had gotten to know a delightful young man named Jeremy."

"Jeremy?... Delightful?" She repeated. I nodded.

"Yes and so mature for his age. And if I'm not mistaken, he's your nephew?" She nodded, still too shocked for words I guess.

"That's how I knew that you were Jenna. At least once a week he comes in and we have a nice long talk. He told me all about his family. You, Elena. He adores you both, and it's apparent in the way he speaks about you." So maybe some of these things were lies, but I was sure Jeremy was actually thinking them...at one point or another. "And he's so intelligent for someone of his age." I smiled. Jenna looked like wanted to smile, but wasn't sure if I was being serious or not. Out of the corner of my eye - because I refused to acknowledge his presence just yet - Logan fumed at being ignored. I decided to put the cherry on top. "Listen, I know what happened with his parents at the end of spring, but I just want to let you know that it's clear that you are doing a great job with both of the kids. I don't know if anyone else has told you this, but raising kids is not easy, and even though they're teens, they still need guidance. You seriously stepped into the role without any experience, and because of that, the kids are doing much better that what could've happened." There were stars in her eyes now. It's proven. Flattery will get you everywhere.

"Thank you so much. I couldn't tell if they were doing okay."

"What, no one's talked to you about this?" I asked. She shook her head. "Not even your brother here?" I pointed my thumb over at Logan, who looked shocked at the accusation of being her brother.

"He's not-"

"I'm not her brother. Listen, Jenna, I'm going to let you to catch up with Gemma here. I'll be back in a moment." And score! He got up and left Jenna and I alone. Half of my mission was complete. Now I had to continue to keep Jenna distracted from him while he was gone.
"Seems like he was a little upset." I said. She shrugged.

"Whatever. Listen Gemma, I really appreciate what you said. The only kind of feedback I've gotten since coming here was from Mr. Tanner. Did you know Mr. Tanner?"

"History teacher, bad attitude. Recently deceased?" - courtesy of Damon, I'm sure - "Yeah, I knew of him." I replied.

"Well I had a parent/teacher conference with him at the beginning of the year, and he told me that Jeremy and Elena needed a adult presence. As if I wasn't adult enough for them."

"What an arsehole. Rest his soul."

"I know right. Total blow to my self-esteem."

"Well, he was wrong. And aren't you so glad that he got replaced by that hunk-of-man Ric?" I lead. She blushed, very lightly.

"Yeah, he is a hottie, right?"

"Yeah, and Jeremy seems to not dislike him too much as a teacher. Teenagers." I shrugged. "You two would make a cute couple."

"Well, I had been thinking about it. We've talked a bit. But then Logan comes out of nowhere and wanted to go out. I didn't really want to but...you know how it is...old loves and whatnot."

"Preach, sister." I nodded encouragingly. My phone buzzed in my pocket. Opening it up surreptitiously while Jenna was talking about her trials as a single guardian while working on her graduate thesis, I saw that the text was from Damon.

Wrap it up. I got the baby V. - Damon
"Oh!" I exclaimed just as Jenna was finishing her long winded story.

"What?!" She asked, alarmed.

"Oh, it's nothing. I'm just afraid I have to cut our talk short. I have a meeting with the boss -" I looked at my bare wrist, luckily she didn't look too, "-right now. It was great meeting you but now I have to run." I quickly walked off behind the counter, placing my apron in the cubby provided, and clocked out. I snuck to the back alley to wait for Damon. Geez. As much as I said I wasn't ever going to be his minion, it sure seemed like that was happening right now.

"I got him knocked out in the trunk. Come on." A voice whispered in my ear. The only warning of his quick presence and departure soon after, was a small gust of wind. I followed the trail of fluttering alley trash to the entrance where he waited for me in this blue mustang, passenger door open and waiting. I guess he did have some manners.

"Where to boss." I mocked, as he peeled away from the curb.

"A little place I like to call Hell." His grin was vicious. I liked it.

"You've been there a lot I take it?"

"Of course, I own a vacation home down there."

"Of course you do." I replied, rolling my eyes at his silliness.

The kidnapping of Logan Fell went without a hitch. A lot of information was learned from the loose-lipped, and then doubly dead, reporter. The Gilbert pocket watch - which everyone privy to the underground going ons of Mystic Falls really wanted their hands on - was stolen from Jeremy by Logan. Meaning that he actually had it on his person at the time of his abduction. Meaning that it was now in Damon's possession.

According to ancestor Gilbert's journals, which Jeremy had been reading a few weeks ago, I remembered, this pocket watch was actually a vampire compass. It legitimately pointed the way to the closest vamp. Damon and I may or may not have played a game of hide and seek with it after finding out.
Unfortunately, Jeremy let history teacher Alaric borrow the journal, and on our way to liberate it from his classroom desk, we found that someone else had beaten us to it. Someone Damon recognized from his human days. A teenaged vampire named Anna. Luckily, Ric was either OCD or paranoid, because he had made a copy of the journal. I thought that required some more looking into, Damon just dismissed it as fortuitous circumstance. The journal entries also hinted at another use of the go-go-gadget pocket watch, however, we couldn't find out anything more about that use with the limited resources we had.

Even though that plan went well, there was still the whole new problem about Uncle John coming to town for a visit. Because John knew vampires, and somehow John knew the Salvatores were vampires. Which begged the question, where was he getting his intel from?

"The tomb vampires." Damon said, sitting on my couch.

"Excuse me?" I asked, stirring the pan of vegetables.

"Anna is out and about, seducing baby Gilbert for information on how to open the tomb. Her mom is in there, along with Katherine, and 25 other vamps from 1865. Anna would never work with John, so there has to be at least one other vampire that was around in 1865, that didn't get stuck in the tomb, that's giving John all this info."

"Well," I said, plating up two dishes of the pasta and veg I'd been cooking, "John isn't the most observant person in the world. I'm sure if you followed him around all day, you'd find something helpful out." I handed him a plate and fork and joined him on the couch with my own and a glass of wine. He took the plate, but looked at me in confusion.

"What is this?" He asked. I lifted an eyebrow.

"I know that your eyesight is much better than mine, but just in case it's failing you at the moment...the little green things are vegetables, and the other things are cute little bow tie noodles. I cooked it, and put some seasoning on it, and when I mixed it together, it became dinner." He looked at me like he wanted to convey that he was not impressed.

"Oh really?" He played along. "Actually, I was wondering why you were giving it to me."

"Well, you're always here. Even though this is my house."
"There's a reason for that."

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah, one, since you're my minion," I rolled my eyes, "your house is my secret lair. And Stefanie and Elena are always at my house. They're really annoying, always professing their love for one another. It got old wayyy before the first time. And since my excellent hearing makes it quite impossible to be anywhere around the house and not hear them, this is the next best place."

"..."

"..."

"Okay. Anyway, you're always in my house. And I've seen you eat, and drink. Heavily." He winked at that. "So, what I'm saying is, I didn't want to make myself a plate and just eat it in front of you. That would be rude."

"Being rude never deterred you before."

"Just eat your food."

"Yes ma'am." He said, taking a bite.

"You have a certain glow about you tonight..." I said to Damon, who had parked himself in the seat across from my current spot behind the bar. Not to mention that I was standing in front of what could be called his favorite seat. "Excitement? Longing? I'm not sure, both of those seem insignificant almost. And I'm not sure if that's a good thing or a bad thing." I finished up my thought.

"So observant, Gemma." He gave me a smarmy smile that was two shades away from being real. I just raised an eyebrow. "Yes. Right. I'm more that excited, I feel...I feel like all my dreams are
gonna come true tonight. Tonight, Gemma," he said lowly, "is the night I've been waiting for, for most of my life."

"Oh." I said, no way to hide the shock in my voice at his revelation. Tonight was the night. Tonight was when I might lose the first person I called friend in years. He was probably more like my best friend really, I didn't know how these things worked anymore. And I couldn't brush the feeling off that tonight big things were going down, and they probably wouldn't be good things.

"Yeah." He grinned. "All the pawns are in place, all the items for the recipe gathered."

"Well, I wish you the best of luck." I said, finally able to reign in my feelings.

"What? You don't want a front seat ticket to the show? I hear there will be fireworks." And see you reunited with your long lost love? I'll pass.

"Oh no. Tonight seems like a stay home kind of night. A book, a bottle white wine and a-

"Bubble bath" Damon finished. "Yeah, I can see how that would be more interesting that what I had planned." He said.

"Wow Damon, your biting wit never fails to bring me to my knees." I rolled my eyes.

"I know, well, I just wanted to tell you that. I'll be off now." He turned to walk away. The tingling in the back of my mind wouldn't stop nagging me until I said something.

"Wait." He turned around. "Do you remember what I said when we first met?"

"Don't call me that?" I rolled my eyes at his humor.

"Yes." I allowed. "But I also said that you might be disappointed with what you came out here to find. And I keep getting feelings that tonight is the night for disappointments."

"Don't worry so much Gem. Tonight will be the best and everything will work out, you'll see." He
turned to walk away again.

"Guard your heart tonight, Damon." I whispered, knowing he could still hear me. "Don't let anything break it, nothing's worth that." And he was out of the door.

I was getting ready for bed when I got a text from Jeremy. It was nearly 1 am.

Hey Gemma, he wrote, I don't know exactly what's going on, but Elena and Stefan just barged into the house and they're having a pretty involved conversation about Damon. It was a wonder that this kid didn't know about vampires yet, seeing as how Elena and Stefan all but forgot about his presence anytime something happened. Apparently, something big happened tonight and they're worried about Damon being a 'loose cannon' because of it. Like I said, I don't know, but I think that if there was any time for a secret friend, it would be right now.

Such a smart kid. I sent him back a quick 'thanks' and grabbed my leather jacket. I didn't feel like changing out of my pajamas, so the good people of Mystic Falls were just gonna have to take me as I was, wild hair and all.

I found him at the bar. Really though, I knew he was gonna be there so it was the only place I looked. From the looks of things, aka the two empty bottles next to him, he was pretty hammered already.

"Hey Damon." I said, sliding into the chair next to him. "How's it going?" He looked at me over the glass that he was steadily knocking back.

"Gemma. Your new look is nice." He eyed me up and down. "Leather and...clouds?" He snorted, taking another drink. "Almost the most revealing thing I've had the pleasure of seeing you in." They were sheep, not clouds on my pj bottoms. Showed how sloshed he was. A vampire that couldn't correctly identify stationary objects. And so what, the tank top showed a little midriff, I was on my way to bed.

"They're sheep Damon, not clouds." I said, taking his glass from him and drinking down the rest of the contents. I stood up, pulling at his arm. "Upsy-daisy Dame. We're going home." He leered at me, getting up unsteadily.
"You're taking me home? Dreams do come true." I just rolled my eyes.

"I'm taking you to your home." I clarified.

"That's no fun Gem." He groaned.

"Too bad, so sad. Jack!" I called the bartender working tonight over, when Damon came into his sights his eyes took on a glazed quality I'd long since associated with compulsion. I snapped him right out of it. "Put all this on Mr. Salvatore's tab." I said waving to the empty bottles. He nodded and went about his business.

"Awe, but I don't want to pay." Damon moaned as I walked him out of the door.

"What kind of person would I be if I didn't stick up for my own kind? And plus, you've been alive forever, that little bit is not gonna put a dent in anything." I spotted his car in the parking lot and started to drag him there as Damon started mumbling about soft fire. It took me awhile before I realized he was talking about my hair. That made me blush a little, it was cute. I found his keys in his front pocket, then was immediately accused of 'getting frisky' with his person. Whatever, he really didn't mind.

Somehow I got him strapped into the passenger's seat and started the drive to his home, which I had been to only once before. He was oddly silent for the whole ride. When we arrived, I helped him out of the car, he seemed to be more lucid, must have been that vampire metabolism, but he still let me help him. Walking into the mansion I asked,

"So where is your room?" He turned his gaze to the second floor landing. I was not in the correct mindset to help him up the stairs, so I just teleported us there.

"Never in 145 years have I felt nauseous, until now."

"Well, I'm glad I could bring back something from your human life."

"Yeah, I could have lived without it." He replied, now dragging me through the hallway. He opened up a door to a room and stepped inside. I followed, shutting the door behind me. When I turned around he was sitting on the bed staring into space.
"You were right." He said suddenly.

"What do you mean?" Though I did have a big clue. I mean, he was here alone.

"Katherine." He said the name like it left a bitter taste in his mouth. "She was never in the tomb." Well that was definitely a twist I hadn't expected.

"I'm sorry. I- I knew something wasn't right, but I never knew what. I'm sorry for your pain." I said, sitting down next to him.

"She made a deal with a Lockwood all those years ago. She was never in any danger of being locked up. Ever." He continued. "And she knew that I had been looking for a way to rescue her. She's been around. From the day the I woke up a vampire, I have dedicated my unlife to finding a way to be reunited with her." Silence. "But it was all a lie." He said, quietly, broken voice and all. "It was a one sided love that unnecessarily destroyed my relationship with my brother, and destroyed me." He turned to look at me then, unshed tears lining his lower lid. "So when you requested hours ago, that I guard my heart and let nothing break it, I'm ashamed to say that unfortunately, it's shattered at the moment." He blinked, sending those trapped tears cascading down his face.

I reached up and wiped away his tears.

"Don't worry." I said. "I'll guard it from now on." He gave a shaky chuckle and just shook his head at me.

Hours later we had changed positions and lost our jackets and shoes. We now lay face to face on his bed, exchanging stories of out exceedingly long lives.

"You know, Damon. I think we just graduated to best friend status."

"You're probably right." He said. And we feel asleep like that. Over the covers, facing each other, with our hands clasped in friendship and a show a solidarity.
That Girl who Comforts Killers

I was not a morning person, never had been. But last night had been a good night. Maybe it was all the soul-bearing, or maybe it was that cloud top mattress. Hell, could've even been the company. But all in all, I wasn't too pissed to be waking up. But if I was gonna stay that way, I needed coffee, STAT. And I was also gonna get the name of that mattress from Damon later.

I didn't know who all was in the house, so I tried finger combing my hair after seeing the monstrosity that it was in the bathroom. Unfortunately, that didn't help a thing, so I just went about my business and went downstairs, hair wild and eyes halfmast.

I followed my nose to the kitchen, easily identified by the smell of that ambrosia called coffee, and passed a gawking Stefan and Elena duo on my way to a seat at the island. I could've cared less about what was going on in their heads.

A cup of hot coffee appeared in a huge mug before me and I couldn't help the moan that escaped after the first sip.

"Darling, how did you know?" I turned to my savior Damon, gifting him with the smile only people that worked in coffee shops had ever seen before this day.

"I have my ways." He replied. I just hummed. "By the way, your hair is looking very....voluminous...this morning." He said, hiding a smirk.

"Yes well, I'm not sure what happened but after last night, it got even worse." Elena glared at me in disgust, like I was a two-bit harlot or something. Dummy. "There's nothing to be done about it." I finished, taking another sip. "What have you got over there?" I asked, nodding to the pan he was tending.

"Oh, just a little bit of this and a little bit of that." He said playfully. Stefan gaped at his brother like he had never seen him before.

"Well, it better be for me." I declared. "I definitely deserve it. Especially after last night." I drawled, locking eyes with Damon. Out of the corner of my eye I saw Elena trying to twist her mouth to say something, before she could, Stefan intercepted. Good man.
"Well, I'm just gonna take Elena home now...yeah." And he hurried her out of the kitchen.

"My, my Miss Doyle. I didn't know you enjoyed playing the double entrendre game." He said after a beat. 

"When I can find a good crowd, it's my favorite thing to do. Did you see Gilbert's face?" I smirked. "But I was serious about that food." I said seriously. "I'm starving." He just fixed me a plate.

"You know they're gonna think your a compelled toy now."

"That's what I was going for. Can't them knowing the real reason we hang out. Then you'd lose your ace and they'd lose their villain."

"God forbid." He rolled his eyes.

"So tell me about that mattress." I started. "It felt like sleeping on a cloud of happiness..."

A few hours later I got a text from Jeremy. 

Just heard a rant from Elena about Damon's bartender slut showing up in her pajamas this morning. Her words, not mine. Don't let me get started on what she said about your hair. Guess 'secret friends' doesn't cut it anymore? ;) He wrote. 

Cheeky brat. I typed. Still secret friends. They just think I'm a one night stand or something. Keep it under your hat and tell your sister to stop talking about people behind their backs. Oh btw, saw you with that one girl, Anna? the other day. Cute.

The next few weeks went by much in the same manner. I spent more time at the Salvatore boarding house, with and without Damon. I mostly avoided Stefan and Elena there, but sometimes they did see me. Really, I was just there to lay on Damon's damn comfortable bed. Often we would lay together while he told me of his grand schemes in life, or rather, unlife. Whichever. I listened raptly to each one, even if it seemed like I was dozing. Most of his plans included food and traveling. I commented once that he must be happy that he can still eat food, and wasn't forced into a vegetarian lifestyle like the Cullens. He kicked me out of his bed for the next two days for drawing yet another parallel between his life and Twilight. And I quote, "compare me to one of those sparkly-ass fairies one more time...' It was just so easy, there was so much angst involved.
As for travel, I outwardly wondered why he hadn't been traveling all over already in his extended life. I mean, I had been *all* over the US and there were still more and new things to see.

"Yeah, I've been around. Chicago during the 'Roaring 20s.' Hung out with all the cool mobsters, but everywhere I went before... now, I guess, I went with the focus of getting more information to free Katherine. If anything, they were all working vacations, I didn't really get to enjoy it." He said.

"Well then, tell you what. I haven't been back to England since I left, and I haven't left the US at all, so they're still plenty of new places to explore. How's about after all our ends are tied up here, we go on vacation together? And put this immortality thing to good use." I promised. He didn't answer verbally, but I'm pretty sure his eyes were saying a resounding 'yes.'

It was now Founder's day, and Mrs. Lockwood had invited me to partake in the 'rich cultural experience.' By the time Damon found me I was wishing that had stayed in bed, his preferably, my new one was still shipping.

"What is up with this town? And all of the parties? I mean, really. Why?" I was ready to rip my hair out. If I heard one more seventeen-year-old speaking in Southern colloquialisms that died in the 1800s, I couldn't be held responsible for my actions.

"Like you aren't used to it Gem." He said, slinging a leather clad arm over my shoulders. "High society parties, you probably went to one at least once a week."

"Yeah, but that was years ago, and at the risk of sounding classist, we *were* high society, not just pretending." He just laughed at me.

"Oh, burn. Anyway," he said, gazing at the quickly setting sun. "The day is almost over, and when night comes, we'll have some more problems." I looked up at him then.

"What do you mean?" I asked. He sighed.

"Let's walk." He said, moving me with him. "So you remember when we relieved Logan Fell of that watch?" I nodded. "Well, it turns out that the Gilbert that invented the watch, while he believed in vampires, he couldn't get any of his inventions to work. Bennett witch 1.0 was in love with him," he rolled his eyes, "and so she spelled the device so that it actually worked." I hummed in acknowledgment. "Well, in addition to being a vampire compass, we recently found out that
when paired with another piece, it was also a vampire *killing* device."

"Wow. So I bet you're keeping that close to home then, huh?"

"Actually no." He grimaced. "Elena's crazy biological mom, who's actually a vampire now that *I* turned - not that I knew-

"Getting off track, Damon."

"Anyway, she's evil now I guess, and threatened Jeremy's life if we didn't fork over the device. She was under the impression that I was in love with Elena and so I'd give it up to stay in her good graces." He snorted. "Yeah right. To be entirely truthful, I gave her the device because if she killed Jeremy, *you* would be upset."

"Aww. I feel *influential*." I drawled, punching him in the side. "But what about the whole vampire killing aspect?"

"Yeah, well, we got witchy to deactivate it."

"Sounds like everything's covered then." I said.

"Yeah, only thing is..." he said, looking towards the setting sun again. "When I had witchy and her grandma open the tomb to get to Katherine, they couldn't reseal it back, and now pretty much all the vampires that were sealed in there for 145 years are out to get revenge on all the founding families and they hate Stefan and I since it was us who brought their existence to light. So I guess that means they hate us doubly..." I gave him a look that said 'spit it out'. "And according to Anna, they've decided that they're gonna attack tonight, right when the fireworks start."

"Hmmm." I let contemplation color my voice. "That doesn't give us enough time to evacuate at all, does it?"

"No, it doesn't. We sent Anna to go get Jeremy out of dodge, and Stefan and Elena are outie, Alaric and I are gonna be armed to the teeth, trying to knock out as many tomb vampires as possible before they kill everyone and make a scene. So I ask you sidekick, you in?" He held out his hand to me.
"I couldn't think of a better way to blow my cover." I placed my hand in his and we walked to Alaric's car.

We came up to him shuffling things around in his trunk, he looked relieved to see Damon, but when he took in my form, he look shocked and lowered the trunk.

"Don't worry about it Ric. She's in the know. She's gonna help us out with our little problem." Damon smirked, looking in Alaric's trunk. Taking the revelation in stride, Alaric turned to me.

"So how long have you been hunting?" He asked, Damon turned as well, wanting to hear my answer. Jerk.

"Well, I known about this world most of my life. I'm very well acquainted with things that go bump in the night." Completely true answer, but vague enough not to give anything away. He nodded in acceptance.

"Nicely played." Whispered Damon.

"Arsehole." I responded.

"Well, you're welcome to anything I have. Doesn't seem like you're armed." I just smiled at him.

"Oh no." I said, pulling off my jacket, showcasing my shoulder holster, complete with a pair of gleaming silver guns. "I never come to a party empty handed." Damon just gawked.

"You've had those on you this entire time?" Damon asked.

"Yeah, just like the knife in my boot." I replied, fluttering my eyelashes demurely.

"That's hot." Damon leered. "But I don't see how I didn't feel those."
"You just weren't touching me the right way Damon." Voice lowering until it took on a husky tone. "Don't worry, I'll give you some lessons later."

"Yes, teacher." Damon purred. Alaric just watched the exchange with a vaguely amused expression. I turned to him and cleared my throat, breaking the atmosphere.

"I will take a stake though. The wooden bullets I have will just incapacitate, not terminate." I said, rummaging around his trunk for just a normal stake. He had a lot of nifty things back there.

DPOV

"Does she know that you're one of those things that go bump?" Alaric whispered to me.

"Course she does." I said, watching her sort through Ric's portable armory, her jeans looked especially tight as she bent down to look at something she had found.

"And what was that whole thing I just witnessed?"

"What are you talking about Ric?" I asked, not taking my eyes off of her.

"That whole 'teacher, I've been a bad boy please punish me' eye-sex thing." I just laughed, Ric was crazy.

"You're funny, Ric. We were just playing around. She's my best friend. And there was no eye-sex."

"Yes, there was. Plenty of it from both ends. And now it's just coming from you because she's busy looking for stakes."

"Well, yeah, there's a lot of junk in the trunk."

"Are you even hearing yourself right now?" Ric asked, incredulously.

"You're loosing it, Ric." I said.
The device hadn't been deactivated. I realized that when a good number of suspicious people - well, I guess vampires - around me grasped their heads in their hands and fell to the ground. If that wasn't disturbing enough, what seemed to be the Mystic Falls Black Ops popped out of nowhere and dragged off the vampires after drugging them with vervain.

Because Damon and I had a plan to take out as many of the tomb vamps as possible, we spread out. That just so happened to work against our favor with this new development. Damon was minutes away, in the thick of the crowd, most likely outing as a vampire now. Just great. I decided to wait around for a bit and observe. If there were any more vamps around I'd just wait for MFPD to show up and follow them.

I didn't have to wait long. Curled up on herself a few feet away in the crowd was a non-descript female vampire. I found the apathy of the crowd at large to be amazing. Sure, there were some pretty - and loud - fireworks going on in the sky, but seriously, people weren't noticing shrieking bodies being drugged and hauled away right next to them. There was something wrong with this town.

I followed the pair to a brick building a few streets away from the town center. Greyson Gilbert, MD. It was kind of ironic that they were stashing the vampire bodies here. Well, there was no going in the front door, so I lurked around looking for a side entrance or something of the sort. 'Lo and behold, I found a Gilbert, a witch, and a Salvatore there, just not the one I was looking for. It took them only a moment to sense my presence, not that I tried to hide it.

"Gemma!" Bonnie greeted, fake smile plastered on. "What are you doing here?" Stefan looked both pained and curious, Elena was in no way hiding her disgust. What a bitch.

"Oh nothing much. The plan was to stake a few vampires, but then that plan was shot to shit when I figured out that someone hadn't despeled the device. So really, less for me to do, but now someone has to save Damon from," I sniffed around dramatically, which wasn't necessary because the smell of smoke and gasoline was heavy in the air, "being burned to a crisp."

"You know what's going on here?" Stefan said almost threateningly, moving defensively in front of Elena, who had a look of shock on her face.

"Uh, duh. Isn't that what I just said? Kids these days. Anyway, who's going in? I would but, uh," I started, looking at my nails, "running into burning buildings isn't really my thing."
"Um, well," started Bonnie, regrouping and looking between me and Stefan and Elena, "I can use my magic to temper the flames a little at the entrance..." she trailed off, eying me warily. I just raised an eyebrow at her.

"I'll run in and grab him." Said Stefan, heroically.

"No Stefan, it's too dangerous! You could never come out." Cried Elena, grabbing onto his jacket.

"Elena," he cupped her cheek with the hand that wasn't in her vice grip, "I have to. He's my brother." Well at least someone here had some common sense.

"Okay, let's get this show on the road, no one's getting any younger but someone is getting quite a bit crispier." Stefan looked at me and shook his head in disappointment. I thought it was clever.

Bonnie lowered the flames and Stefan took off into the building.

"Was it just me," I whispered to Bonnie, "or was that whole Elena/Stefan "Days of our Lives" thing just a little over the top?"

"Totally," she replied, "they've been like that since day one. It gets hella annoying." Bonnie wasn't too bad. Anyone who talked smack about their friends' stupid relationships while standing right behind them was okay in my book.

"I bet." I said grimacing. I totally understood why Damon was always at my house. Elena finally snapped out of her daze and turned around to talk to us.

"Gemma, I want to apologize for my behavior. I had no idea you were in all of this. I thought you were just some poor girl Damon compelled. I was just disgusted at his actions." She nodded.

"Really? Because it really seemed like I was getting the brunt of all those looks. I mean, it's hard enough being a slutty bartender, but to be a disgusting one on top of that. Gee, I don't think I can handle all that responsibility." I just let that hang in the air a while, leaning against the brick alley wall. Bonnie's eyes were opened wide and watching the proceedings in front of her with interest.
"Yes, well..." Elena cleared her throat. She didn't know what to say, there was nothing to say. She turned back around and we all waited for the Salvatores. It didn't take long, probably something to do with the super speed. Damon was dropped on the ground, Stefan was being coddled by Elena.

"Well Gemma, now you have to admit it. I am smoking hot." He gave his onesided grin that wasn't quite a smirk and I found myself nodding in agreement despite the tactlessness of his joke. Everything was fine until Bonnie opened her big mouth.

"That's the last time I help you Salvatores. This is all your fault. You-" I had been starting to like her too. Shame. I fixed her with a sharp glare.

"Hey! Bennett. This is your fault. If you didn't want to unspell the device you could have come up with a plan to use it to your advantage, instead of just lying about it." She tried to open her mouth, I cut her off before words could come out. "And don't start with that witches versus vampire shit. When it comes down to it, it makes more sense to have two vampires on your side when facing off with give or take twenty-four ravenous vampires that have had nothing but revenge on their minds during the active moments of their century long captivity. So just get out of here before you say something else that I don't like. Scat!"

And still she tried to talk. She didn't deserve the righteous indignation that was rolling off of her. "Say one more word and you will get close and personal with the business end of this pistol." I said flashing my guns. "And they may be wooden bullets, but I promise you won't notice the difference." She failed at hiding the fright on her face, but with a huff and a toss of her hair over her shoulder, she trotted away.

"Hey!" Elena yelled, fuming. "You have no right to talk to her like that!" I cut my glare to her, she gulped.

"Don't think the same offer doesn't apply to you, Elena. I've enough for Stefanie as well. Care to try me?" I asked, putting hands on the handles of the silver weapons. "Russian Roulette was always a favorite of mine. That and William Tell. I find hearts instead of apples more cathartic." I rose an eyebrow in challenge, more to Stefan than her, she heard me loud and clear. Stefan shook his head minutely. Good man. At least he had some sense about some things. Certainly had poor choice in girlfriends, but hey, what can you do?


"Please stop with the fire puns. We get it." I said helping him up. "Now, lets rustle you up some
grub." I put his arm over my shoulder and we started walking away.

"Sure thing, cowgirl." He replied. Stefan and Elena looked on in different mixtures of confusion, surprise and wariness.

"I just killed Jeremy." He said, from his place in the shadowed corner of my room. His abrupt presence had roused me from sleep, and I was in the process of waking up when he told me this. I was still in the stage where I was hoping that this was just a terrible nightmare. But I knew I wasn't still sleeping. This was Damon, he did what he wanted, when he wanted. He felt things too deeply yet acted as if he didn't. I was shocked, but not.

"Come into the light." I said. After a few moments he complied. With him now in the moonlight, I could seen the tracks of blood running from the corners of his mouth down his neck. I could see the feral look in his eyes.

"I was so angry and broke his neck. Then I just left." So this blood wasn't Jeremy's. It was someone else's, or multiple someones.

"Why were you angry?" I asked calmly, getting out of bed to walk to him.

"Because Katherine came back and she tricked me. Again." I grabbed his hand and pulled him to the bathroom. It was too easy to do, he was out of it. When we got there, I guided him to sit on the stool as I searched around for a dark towel.

"How did she trick you?" I found a black towel, and turned the tap on, the water warming steadily.

"She pretended to be Elena." I wet the towel and turned back to him.

"And what did she do to you as Elena?" I started to wipe off the drying blood from his face. He looked so forlorn.

"She tried to kiss me." My eyebrows twitched at this surprising revelation but I kept my hands steady, wiping away the blood. I tilted his head up, exposing his neck to clean. I absently acknowledged that his trust of me must have been great if he allowed himself to bare his throat to me.
"That is a low blow. But you're telling me that she didn't succeed?"

"I didn't want it. I have no desire for my brother's girl." So we're making progress with the Salvatore brother relationship. And I guess I was a little unnecessarily relieved that he wasn't pining for Elena nor Katherine anymore. Not that I wanted to fill that void in his life. No way...

"Do you know why she did it?" Suddenly he turned angry. Pushing my hand away from himself and standing up. Pacing the cheap tile of my bathroom.

"Why else? To humiliate me. The degrade me further. Why wouldn't she do it is a better question." I took his discarded seat and watched him pace and rant to himself. "She needed a way to get into Elena's house, so she used me. Yet again. And then when I confronted Elena about it and she acted - well not acted because she actually didn't know - like she didn't know what was going on. I got so angry. And then I realized that that bitch Katherine was the reason for everything horrible in my life, and Elena was there looking just like her and Jeremy came in trying to protect his sister and I just snapped. And so did his neck."

He was still pacing and ranting I stood up in front of him to give him a proper slap. Partially because he needed to calm down and mostly because he killed Jeremy. My slap seemed to completely deflate him.

"I told you what would happen if you messed with Jeremy. And you did it anyway. You're lucky that he has that resurrection ring, because if he didn't we wouldn't be friends anymore." That stopped him up short.

"Wait, how did you know he had a ring? Because I sure didn't."

"Aren't you tired of asking me how I know things?" I slapped him again, harder than last time. "And that was for snapping his neck without knowing that he would wake up again."

"I'm so tired." He said, holding his cheek and pouting like a chastised child. Green clashed with blue when our eyes met for the first time that night and I could see the weariness reflected in his orbs.

"Then go to sleep."
"I can't be alone tonight. Don't make me be alone." He was forceful with his voice, but he pleaded with his eyes. I sighed.

"Fine, you can stay, but you will not get in my bed with anything bloody on and no funny business from you, sir. You know the deal." I walked back to my room, getting snuggled back in my bed trying to find the warm spot I'd left behind. The bed dipped behind me, and I felt a body, cooler than mine, but not cold or in any way uncomfortable, snuggle up to my back. "My, my, Damon, I would not have pegged you for a cuddler."

"Shut up." He said, slinging an arm across my waist, pulling me tighter to him. "I have needs too. You're only just finding out because all the other times you were in my bed your were aggressively asleep and wouldn't let me get anywhere close to you." He rested his cool cheek on my neck. "And my cheeks still hurt, so you have to make me pancakes in the morning."

"In what world do you get rewarded with my pancakes the morning after you kill someone I've deemed important to me?"

"In the world where we're besties and you take care of me and forgive me for being an idiot."

"Well, as long as you're aware of your own intelligence status."

The morning came and with it, thoughts of pancakes. That infernal vampire, planting the ideas of pancakes in my mind at night knowing that I'd dream of them and then have to make them in the morning. It was a struggle untangling myself from the sheets and voluntarily getting out of bed, but I did it, and I turned back to the bed to see a sleepified Damon snuggling up to a pillow. The relaxed state easily took years off his normal everyday appearance, and added a good dose of vulnerability that was never there during normal business hours. I decided to let him be as I walked to the kitchen to get started on the darn pancakes.

While mixing the batter, I decided that Jeremy should have been awake, or at least had enough sleep to be awakened, by now. Grabbing my cellphone, I hit the speed dial for him. After a few rings, he answered.

"Mmmrgh...hello?" Said a sleepy voice. Teenagers. They were always sleeping. Not to mention that I had just woken up too...

"Jeremy. How are you?"
"Gemma! Damon! He... he.." Well my presence on the other end of the phone line definitely woke him up.

"Shh..shh Jeremy. Calm down. It's fine. I know what he did. What I want to know is are you okay? Any lingering pain? Any nightmares?"

"No, no, none of that. I'm physically fine. But how do you know? Is he with you? Gemma, you have to get away!"

"Jer, calm yourself. I'm fine, you're fine, we're all fine. Damon won't hurt me. He can't. And I know how to handle him. Just make sure that your family's okay. I'm sure you know by now that Katherine's running around under the guise of Elena and now has access to your house?"

"Yeah, yeah but, are you sure you're okay? How do you know he wont hurt you?"

"Well for one, there's nothing about me that remotely reminds him of the ex-lover that he spent all of his un-life searching for, unlike a certain boy I know..." I said pointedly as I poured batter onto the hot griddle.

"...So you're saying the reason he attacked me was because Elena looks like Katherine?"

"In so many words. Not discounting your importance Jeremy, because you are very important to me and you can be sure that I reamed Damon good when he told me what happened, but really babe, you were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. After the whole tomb fiasco, and then having Her show up here and throw herself at him, it became too much and he had a severe mental break. Now you know that even when normal humans have mental breaks, there can be some pretty dire consequences, but just think if every emotion was infinitely heightened. You have Anna, I know she spoke to you about this. Breaking one neck, of a person that came back, I'm thinking that's a pretty mild consequence don't you?"

"...Yeah. I guess I do understand that. I mean when I saw them take away Anna last night, I felt so low. And I guess I can't get mad at Damon for succeeded at something I had failed at..."

"..."
"...Jeremy Gilbert. Are you trying to tell me, that you attempted to kill yourself last night?" I said in a scarily calm voice.

"It's possible." He squeaked out. "But not, like, permanent dead. Vampire dead." He clarified quickly.

"...This is a conversation that we will save for when we are face to face. Don't do anymore risky things and tell your sister and sir-broods-a-lot what I told you. Do what you can to get them to see the other side of things. I will talk to you later, young man."

"Bye Gemma..and thank you."

"For what?"

"For caring."

"Oh you charmer you, this doesn't get you out of anything at all. See you later." I ended the call and platted the perfectly cooked pancakes, moving to the fridge to get out the whipped cream and strawberries. I turned around, arms full, unsurprised to see Damon sitting at the counter. I had heard him awakening midway through my conversation. Setting the pancakes in front of him, I shook the canister of whipped topping, then sprayed a smile on the top pancake. I spooned some strawberries to be the eyes, and sprinkled a few more around the plate. Setting the syrup within reach, I gestured the plate in front of him.

"Voila!" I exclaimed. "Pancakes as requested."

"Wow." He said, picking up a fork, sincerely surprised, "I didn't think I'd actually be getting pancakes from you."

"Well, I never said I wouldn't. I keep my promises." His eyes narrowed at that. Ah. The great and *touchy* Salvatore temper.
"What's that supposed to be? A jab at me for not upholding promises?"

"Not at all, I've never asked you to make me a promise." I stayed calm. He was really acting ridiculous.

"And why's that? Do you not trust me Gemma? Am I too much of a devil for you to make a deal with?"

"Damon, I don't ask you for promises because I don't want you to feel obligated to do anything. All of this, us, our friendship," I motioned between the two of us, "I don't want you doing any of it because you have to keep a secret or you have to do whatever. I want you to do what you want to do. I'm your friend, not your keeper. I want your actions to be of your own volition. I never want you to feel trapped."

"Well..." he ran his hand through his hair sheepishly, "thank you. I- I appreciate it." He stuffed a slice of pancake in his mouth and chewed it thoughtfully. "I'm sorry I attacked you like that. I'm still messed up from...last night...Why?" I answered with a questioning gaze. "Why did you justify what I did? Why did you tell the Gilbert not to blame me? Why do you protect me? And defend me? Why do you know what's going on in my head when even I'm not sure?" My gaze on him softened.

"Because I care Damon. Because you're in my heart. And remember, if I didn't trust you, you would have been in my bed last night." I said, saucily.

"That sounded spectacularly dirty Gemma." He winked. "But I'm glad." He said after a moment. "Seems I was missing out on this whole friendship deal these last 145 years.

"Yeah yeah, eat your pancakes before they get cold you sap." I plated my own and joined him at the counter, grabbing the whipped cream and working on my own pancake masterpiece. When I finished with the topping, I looked up to see Damon staring at my food incredulously. "What." I asked, looking down at my plate. I didn't see anything amiss.

"Do you want some more pancakes with all that whipped cream?" He chuckled.

"You jealous or something?" I replied, tucking in.
"So Elena, Ric and I are taking a road trip down to the Duke campus where Isabel used to work. Apparently, her office still hasn't been messed with since her disappearance, so we're gonna take advantage of her nosiness and see if we can't find anything about this dopplegänger situation. Wanna join?"

"Eh. Jeremy's not going?"

"I keep wondering whether or not I should feel threatened by your fixation on baby Gilbert."

"Oh, Damie." I cooed. "No one could ever replace you. But he's like my little bro. I gotta keep tabs on him, or random sociopaths would just have a field day taking turns breaking his neck. You know how it is."

"Oh ho ho." He laughed, mirthlessly. "You're just gonna run that little indiscretion into the ground, huh?"

"Oh well, you know. 'Women and their grudges'." I quipped. "But seriously, I don't feel like moving right now. What's going on in town?"

"Lazy." He accused. "But Stefan's hanging back with Caroline to try and help her learn control. Ugh. He's gonna ruin her with that animal blood diet." He groaned. "If you wanna make jokes about sparkling vegetarian vampires, Stefan's your man." I could practically hear him rolling his eyes.

"Mmkay. Well, call me if you find anything. I'm going back to bed." I said, then hung up before he could drag me into another vein of conversation.

And I didn't wake up until it was well into the afternoon. After showering and fixing something to eat, I decided to head over to the Salvatore Boarding House to see if I could catch up with Stefan and Caroline. Knocking on the massive doors of the estate didn't yield any results, so I decided to venture into the woods surrounding the area, trying my luck at finding the pair. I expected to see Stefan giving Caroline some long, sappy speech about her responsibility as a new vamp. What I didn't expect was to find Caroline, then subsequently lose her somewhere in the bushes to my left. Her shriek after spotting me was a big surprise.
Stefan was surprised too, if the way he ran over here with worry on his face was any indication. He looked to me in askance, I just shrugged.

"Ummm, Caroline, dear. What are you doing in the bushes?" I tried not to laugh at the sheer ridiculousness of the situation, but seeing Stefan's disapproving face, I don't think I was successful. She didn't answer. I turned to Stefan. "Stefan, what is she doing? I know she's in there."

"Um, Elena and I may have let it slip that you're a vampire hunter. And so now Caroline is afraid of you." I rolled my eyes at him and his big mouth. Then I did a little mental roll at Damon because it was his fault that people thought I was a vampire hunter. Well, it was better than the alternative.

"Is this true Blondie?"

"You're gonna stake me like Damon tried to!" She yelled. I raised my eyebrow at that new info. Though it was Damon, so not really surprising. At all.

"Not true. I'm not staking Stefan right now, am I? No. So come on out and stop acting crazy." The bushes rattled and parted to reveals dirty and watery eyed Caroline. "Now why'd you think I'd attack you?"

"Well you're a hunter..."

"And..."

"You're scary!"

"Hmph.

"I mean, come on Gemma. You have to know." She said, crossing her arms. "You hardly ever smile or laugh, if looks could kill, your glare would go the extra mile and torture it's victim before death." I couldn't help but to preen at that. I'd been perfecting that glare all of my life, good to know it worked. "And Stefan said you threatened him, Elena, and Bonnie with your guns." Stefan coughed in discomfort behind me. I swivelled around, pinning him with the aforementioned glare. His put his hands up in defense. "Is that so?" I asked her, still focused on Stefan.
"Uhhh..yeah. Sorry Stefan." She whispered.

"Well," I said, turning back to face her, "they deserved it." I shrugged. That's all I had to say about the matter. "So what are you two teens up to today? Working on control?"

"Yeah? But it's so boring, Gemma. You have to save me. All I want to do is see Matt. I haven't seen him in the daylight in so long, and I finally have this nifty ring to help out. I have to get ready for the party Tyler's throwing tonight at the watering hole. Matt will be there." She squealed. I looked over to see how Stefan was reacting to her... zealous attitude. The frown lines on his face told me that he wasn't having any of that.

"Caroline." He dragged out, crossing his arms. "You're not ready for that kind of exposure."

"But Stefan..."

"No! Can you tell me with absolute certainty that if alone with Matt, you would be able to withstand the urge to drink his blood? All your senses are heightened now, you don't have enough practice under your belt for me to be comfortable in leaving you alone." She looked to me, as if I was going to save her. I thought I was "dangerous".

"Gemma..." she whined. I put my hands up in front of me.

"Don't look at me, Blondie. Stefan is the vampire authority here. If forehead says you're not ready to be in public, then sorry, but I'll have to back him up on that. There's only one vampire I clean up after, and it's not you."

"You clean up... Damon's... messes?" Stefan said slowly.

"Sometimes. Sometimes I even help make them." I shrugged. "Depends on how I'm feeling."

"...What?!" Stefan and Caroline exclaimed in sync.

"Well, yeah. It's a small town. It gets a little boring sometimes. When I'm really bored..." I leaned into Stefan and Caroline conspiratorially. They leaned towards me, eyes wide. "I bring a body to
Damon, and while it's still alive, I pull out his bones, one... by... one." Caroline gasped, covering her mouth with her hand, eyes tearing. "Damon especially loves it when the man buzzes in pain if we don't get the bone out all the way!" I threw my head back and cackled.

"You're a monst-" Stefan started, then stopped. "Wait, 'buzzes in pain'?" He looked confused.

"Yeah," I shrugged, nonchalantly, "buzz. You know, like in the game: 'Operation'. That's what we play when we're really bored. Damon really sucks at it. But I'm not sure if he sucks on purpose or not. Eh, I'll figure it out one of these days."

"That...was not what I thought you meant." Stefan said, running his hands through his hair and shaking his head.

"OMG!" Caroline threw herself at me. "I'm so glad you're not a serial killer like Damon." She sobbed into my neck. They were too fun to mess with, but Caroline was too close to my neck for comfort. I gently pried her away from my person, and motioned for Stefan to take her away. He caught on pretty quick.

"Well, that was frightening." I said.

"Gemma..." Caroline said, pupils dilated, "you smell really good." Black started seeping into the veins underneath her eyes.

"And that's why you can't go to the party tonight." I pointed at her. "Case closed."

DPOV

I was bored, bored, bored. And it all stemmed from the fact that a sensual little red-head wasn't with me. Did I say sensual? I actually meant... nope, that's what I meant. She was fun, and her tongue was so sharp I was surprised she hadn't cut herself on it yet. And above all of that, her very presence just made everything better. She was too good for me. I had too much baggage, but that didn't mean that I wasn't going to enjoy her company as long as I had it.

The search of Isobel's office was going abysmally. Sure, we got some important information so the whole trip wasn't a bust, but by far, worst vacation ever. First, Isobel's shady assistant mistook Elena for Katherine, and in order to save her from dying - which would counteract this whole trip - I took the arrow for her. Who even wields crossbows anymore? Apparently, just her and Alaric.
And then Elena's stuck up self didn't even thank me for saving her life! Yeah, sure, I killed her brother. But, huge asterisk! He came back! I mean, if he can forgive me, she should be able to. Geez, I was feeling extremely under-appreciated. I needed a Gemma pep talk. Vanessa - Isobel's assistant - finally put down her weapon and helped out, bring our attention to some archaic looking curse that required some moonstone thing and the sacrifice of a dopplegänger, and hinted at the existence of werewolves. As if that wasn't enough, the text hinted that vampires vs. werewolves was a real thing, and a werewolf bite was fatal to a vampire. When I called my dearest brother to tell him of this development, he responded by telling me himself and Gemma were currently in the middle of the woods, on the search for Caroline, during a full moon.

Perfect.

GPOV

Caroline didn't listen, and because she didn't listen, I had been recruited to help find her. You'd think that finding a kid at a party would be easy. I mean, they're all in one area, and they move slowly because they're drunk. Oh no. Not this time. Because Caroline had to go off farther into the woods to make out with her boyfriend. Bad idea. Stefan and I split up, hoping to find her quicker, so far, I hadn't had any luck. Then I heard the howl of a wolf. Bad idea had just been upgraded to a horrible idea.

I took off running towards where I heard the howl, hoping that I got to Stefan and Caroline in time. It took me several minutes, but I did finally reach the area they were at. It was quite a sight, a fierce dark wolf inches away from Caroline's face, frothing at the muzzle and snapping at her. Stefan was recovering on the ground a few meters away. I guess he got thrown? I don't know, I wasn't sure what he was doing with his life.

"Caroline, you're going about this the entirely wrong way." I said, hands on my hips, having walked up within reaching distance of the two.

"Gemma, get out of here." Stefan said, "It's a werewolf." I rolled my eyes.

"No shit Sherlock. But we don't want him biting Caroline, now do we?" With that I reached toward the wolf's ear. He had been ignoring me for the most part, more interested in trying to rip into the vampire beneath him, but as my hand got closer, he turned his head to me and snapped at my fingers. Good think my reflexes were quick. "Hey!" I frowned at him. "None of that, wolf." I swatted his nose, making him cease growling and start to whine in confusion. I reached to his ear again, and made it there with my hand still in tact. Threading my fingers through his rough fur, I started to rub at the base of his ear. He choked out a rumbling growl, which I took to be a good thing, and so doubled my efforts but added my other hand to his other ear. He relaxed significantly, eyelids becoming heavy under my ministrations. Caroline and Stefan just gawked. Awestruck.
"Move it or lose it, Caroline. Just because I have magic fingers doesn't mean this still isn't a danger zone." She sped over the Stefan quickly.

"How are you controlling him?" Stefan asked, incredulous.

"I'm not controlling him. I'm just giving him a little scratch. All dogs love that." The wolf panted in agreement, sitting down and leaning further into my hands.

"That isn't a domesticated dog! That's a werewolf!"

"Please, he's just an overgrown puppy." I grabbed the sides of his head and rubbed my nose against his. "Aren't you? Yes you are. You just wanted to play. Yes you did." The wolf huffed and butt his head against my hand, asking for more rubs. I was happy to give them. I had a weakness for canines. All types. I got down to my knees to get better leverage. He lowered himself, and then after a while, got caught up in the moment and exposed his soft belly. "Who wants their belly rubbed? You do." I cooed. I really couldn't help myself.

"Okay, this is getting disturbing." Deadpanned Caroline.

"You can leave." I said, rolling my eyes. "We don't need you. And it would probably be safer for your health and all, you know, considering."

"Yeah right, I can't do that. If I left your alone with that wolf, Damon would have my head."

"Suit yourself, but Blondie, that means you need to head out. He doesn't like vampires, so the less, the better for everyone. Isn't that right?" I turned back to my new wolf friend who's head was resting on my thigh.

"Good riddance!" She yelled as she ran off.

"Teenagers." I said to Stefan. "Anyway, who is this?"

"Well, seeing as Damon's been having suspicions of the Lockwood family holding a secret of the supernatural variety, and the fact that this wolf broke out of Mason Lockwood's trunk, well, it's
Mason Lockwood." He summed up.

"Mm-hmm. Alright then." I stood up, Mason followed my lead. "Show me the way to his car. We'll see if he has anything there that can help us."

"But what about...him?" Stefan asked warily, eyeing the now-tame Mason that was all but glued to my side.

"Oh, don't worry about him," I said, stroking the fur of his back, "he's fine. Now, lead the way Stefan, I haven't got all night." Stefan finally got the memo and started leading the way to the truck, glancing back every so often to make sure Mason hadn't had a change of heart. When we got to the seen, I saw an older model SUV that's entire back window was busted out. There was glass on the ground, signaling that Mason indeed had jumped out of the window. Intense. Mason left my side to sniff around the area, probably recognizing his human scent, or at least allowing that something around here was familiar. Stefan freaked out and ran to climb up a tree. I looked up at him, an eyebrow raised.

"Yeah, just stay up there."

Mason kept walking, and I followed for several minutes, we ended up going down some stairs, entering a kind of catacomb that was equipped with a cage. Mason nosed the cage open, then walked in and sat smack dab in the middle. I saw that there were anchors in the stone walls of the cage, probably to string up prisoners with chains. This was most likely where Mason was planning on changing. Apparently, he had to change his plans abruptly. I wonder what made that happen. I walked over to him and gave him one last pat on the head.

"Well, it's getting pretty late, and you seem calm enough right now. I'll leave you here, okay?" I spoke to the wolf that was mostly running on instinct but I was sure had some human cognizance in there somewhere. As I started to walk away, he whined and tried to follow. "Hey now," I turned back to him, "none of that. You have to stay here for the rest of the night. We don't want you wandering around scaring anymore of the villagers, right?" I scratched under his chin. "Don't worry, I'll bring your car around. And some clothes." With that, I walked away, closing and locking the cage door behind me.

I went back to the plot of woods where the car was, to find Stefan still in the tree.

"Thank God you came back." He said. "I was just about to come looking for you."
"Right. Anyway, you can come on down and head home. Mason's locked up in his cage. I was just going to drop of his car closer since he'll probably be extremely disoriented when he wakes up."

"If you're sure..." Stefan trailed off, jumping down to the ground.

"Yep, I'll be done in ten minutes, tops."

"Well, in that case, you should probably stop by the boarding house before you go home."

"Why is that?" I asked, crossing my arms and lifting an eyebrow. He ran a hand through his hair.

"Because Damon is probably super worried right now. I told him that we were all in the woods right after he told me Mason was a werewolf who's bite could kill a vampire. He was on his way home."

"Great, now he's gonna try to harass Mason in the next couple of days." I put a hand over my eyes in exasperation.

"That is extremely likely, seeing as how he was obsessed with figuring out what the Lockwood's were for the past week."

"Awesome." I said, sarcastically. "I'll be there eventually. Don't give him too many details on what happened here, and maybe we can avoid some drama in the upcoming days."

"Aye, aye." Stefan saluted me, before speeding off. I just opened the truck door, and let out a big sigh before looking around for Mason's keys.

When I got to the boarding house, I was immediately manhandled by none other than Damon. First, he lifted me up and shook me. Not the best way to greet someone. Before then, I hadn't really thought about our difference in height. I mean, I had never really been a "pocket-sized" girl. Always kind of awkwardly tall when compared to other girls during my time. Well, times changed, and the average height increased over the years, so while now I was more or less around the "average" height for a woman, Damon was significantly taller. As evidenced by the way he lifted me by my armpits and shook me around like a rag doll.

"What were you thinking! Going outside, playing in the woods while there was a werewolf loose!
Sloppy Gemma, very sloppy." Damon yelled at me.

"Stefaaaaaaaannnn!" I groaned. "I thought we agreed not to say anything." I let my head loll around on my neck as Damon kept shaking me and telling me how irresponsible I was being. Stefan seemed to enjoy the sight. I knew there was a reason I didn't like him.

"I didn't say anything." He started. "However, Damon cornered Caroline, who told him almost everything." Damon stopped shaking me, setting me down on my feet. Finally.

"Almost everything?" He growled, head tilted and freaky glint in his eyes.

"Yeah, she failed to mention how Gemma was playing with the wolf like it was a puppy."

"What!?" Damon yelled, looking back at me.

"Stefan!" I yelled angrily. The betrayal stung. He just shrugged.

"Yeah, don't forgot that he snapped at her, almost bit her too!" Yelled Caroline from farther in the house.

"WHAT?!" Damon yelled again. His eyes cataloged me from head to toe, his hands ran up and down my arms, stopping at my hands, lifting them up so he could count all my fingers. He lifted one of my hands to his face, putting his nose to my wrist, breathing deeply as he closed his eyes. Stefan just looked on in interest. I shot him a glare.

"What are you doing this time Damon?" I rolled my eyes.

"Shh. I'm checking to make sure you're okay." He said, not changing his position.

"You could just, I don't know, ask me." I suggested.

"No, this way, I know for sure." He opened his eyes and pulled my wrist away. "Yep, you're fine, all levels are acceptable."
"Thank you so much Dr. Salvatore. I don't know what I would have done with myself if you hadn't accosted me upon entry." He rolled his eyes and turned around, my hand still in his, he dragged me behind him into the sitting room.

"Oh, don't be so dramatic." He drawled. "Now, tell me what you know."

I was walking up to the Gilbert's door, cheap side dish in hand. Jenna had come into the Grille a few days ago, dead set on getting me to come to the shindig she was throwing in honor of her best friend, Mason, coming to town. She and Ric were now officially together, and she said the get together had actually been his idea. Unfortunately, after hearing this I decided that the set up was just too perfect: Mason being invited to a party where Damon was sure to be in attendance because of his 'friendship' with Ric. Which meant, I had to go in order to dissuade Damon from doing something irreparably stupid during or after the party. And I had just wanted a quiet weekend watching trashy soaps on the telly. Alas, it wasn't meant to be.

So here I was, being ushered into the house by an overzealous Jenna. She guided me into the kitchen, where she then proceeded to talk my ear off about her graduate thesis. I was surreptitiously looking around for a stiff drink when Ric walked in with a new face who could only be Mason Lockwood. And a tall drink of water he was. I gave him an appreciative once over before resuming the search for alcohol.

"Gemma!" Exclaimed Jenna. "I'd like to introduce you to my best friend from high school, Mason Lockwood." He held out a hand that I grasped.

"Pleasure to meet you." I said.

"No, the pleasure is all mine." He responded. The charmer. His nostrils flared minutely and he gave me a short but inquisitive glance. Either he was smelling the vampire on me, or he recognized my scent from a few nights ago. "You're familiar to me somehow, did we meet already?" He asked. Jenna was extremely involved in her conversation with Ric, so I felt it was safe enough to divulge some information.

"Course we did," I said, "and you're just as cute in this form as you are in the other one." I smiled, cheekily. His eyes widened and he pulled up my hand that he was still holding to his nose. To anyone looking, it would seem like he was just kissing the back of my hand in greeting. But I knew that he was testing my scent.
"You were in the woods that night... and in my truck... and in the cellar." He said, lowering and letting go of my hand. "You helped somehow. I don't know, it was just...clearer around you. Thank you." He said, earnestly. I waved away his thanks.

"It was no problem. Now we better act like awkward strangers because we've got incoming." Jenna and Ric walked over then.

"You've got to tell us what Jenna was like in high school." Ric started.

"Oh yeah," Mason smirked, "I've got all the dirt." Jenna groaned and covered her eyes.

"If we're going back in time, I'm gonna need something stronger than a Sprite." She said. Yes! That's what I've been waiting for since I got here...ten minutes ago.

"Well, you're in luck." Mason said, pulling out a bottle. "Because I brought a party favor."

"Awesome," Jenna said, taking the bottle from him and grabbing shot glasses for each of us, "it's the good stuff too," she said pouring it.

"Right? I didn't steal this bottle from dad's stash either." Mason said.

"Wow, you've really grown up." She mocked.

"So what should we toast to?" I asked, breaking up their reunion fest.

"How about...to dirty shame?" Mason threw out. Jenna nodded.

"I've got plenty of that." She said, raising her glass. We all toasted each other and threw the drinks back. She quickly filled them again, I wasn't complaining. Her face quickly soured. I turned to try and see what had made her mood decline so quickly. Oh, Damon was finally here. That would do it. I took a drink. Mason just eyed me and filled the glass again. There was potential for great friendship there.
"Ugh, Damon's here." She said.

"If you hate him so much, why'd you invite him?" I asked. Ric looked over at me questioningly like since I was friends with Damon I couldn't talk about him behind his back. Whatever, he could hear me from across the house anyway.

"He's just so irritating. He thinks he's God's gift to women." Then she looked over to me as if actually seeing me for the first time and blushed an alarming shade of red. "Oh my God, Gemma. I didn't mean it like that. I'm so sorry."

"Why are you apologizing?" I was truly confused. Ric was just over to the side smug smile in place. Suspicious.

"Well," she spluttered, "aren't you and Damon dating?" She asked. The accusation echoed through my mind. Weren't we dating? That would be so...weird. I mean, sure, he was attractive, but to date him. I don't know about all that.

"No!" I exclaimed.

"But you're always flirting, and you never cut him off at the bar - which is unhealthy by the way - and you're always watching each other and touching each other." Ric exploded in laughter. I glared at him.

"What are you going on about over there, Chuckles?" I asked, crossing my arms. I was not pouting. I was not.

"That's the exactly same thing I pointed out to Damon weeks ago. As expected, he denied, denied, denied." Me and Alaric were no longer friends. And I still wasn't pouting. Mason just looked on, amused.


"What's 'ew'? Damon asked, slinging his arm around my shoulders. He was not helping my argument. The other three adults looked pointedly at his and and tried to refrain from laughing.
"If you must know, Jenna, and apparently Alaric, were under the impression that we were dating. To their ludicrous assumption, I responded, 'Ew. Not likely.'"

"Don't be like that Gem." He said, smirking down at me. "You know I'm a catch."

"Yeah," I rolled my eyes, "with as many women as you've been with, I'd be sure to catch something." That did it. The tenuous hold our audience had on their laughter vanished, and the kitchen was a riot.

"Gemma," he asked, looking affronted, "are you calling me a disease-riddled whore?" He was too serious. It was hilarious, but I kept a straight face.

"If the STD fits." I responded. We stared at each other for a moment, until we both broke down in laughter.

How'd you like it? Tell me in reviews!

Ren!
"Tell me this Damon, because I really just don't understand." I said, walking up to him. I saw his back stiffen as he registered my voice. Before I interrupted, he had been whispering something to Jeremy, something Jeremy apparently didn't like. If the pout on his lips meant anything. He also had a bag of something in his hands that Damon was in the process of taking. "How is it that I was gone for only a day, and you already have a mess for me to clean up?" I continued, stopping a few feet away and crossing my arms, waiting for an answer.

"Gemma!" He exclaimed, turning around smoothly as if he had done nothing wrong. "What a lovely surprise that you've decided to come and visit. Unfortunately, we have a bit of an asbestos problem, so you and Jeremy really need to get out of here as soon as possible while we get that fixed." He said, starting to usher Jeremy toward me. Pants on fire.

"Of course. Wouldn't want that nasty stuff getting into my lungs." I played along, but only for a second. I wasn't stupid. "But shouldn't we take Mr. Lockwood along with us, so that fate doesn't befall him as well?" I asked innocently. Jeremy looked flabbergasted that I even knew that Mason was here with Damon. Damon looked put out. As if he could get anything pass me, whether I'd been gone or not.

"Who told you?" Now he was the one pouting.

"Ran into the witch, she spill the beans after a few well placed... suggestions. Heard you lost a friend. I'm sorry," I was talking about Liz. I knew they had something close to a friendship, even if it was based on lies on his part.

"Well," he waved a hand, "I really only need one friend, and look at that, she's here! Nothing a little time won't heal." He said, nonchalantly.

"Wait, wait, wait." Jeremy interjected. "You know about Mason being... And about Sheriff Forbes and what happened yesterday... How? You were gone." He asked.

"Baby Gilbert, Gemma here has her finger on the very pulse of this town. I'd be more worried if there was something she didn't know."

"Pulse." He repeated, then his eyes got wide. "You aren't... you aren't a vampire too?! Ric said you were like him!" He exclaimed. Damon chuckled. Leave it to him to mislead a teenager with a few
"Not at all, Jeremy. If you ask Ric, he swear up and down that I'm a hunter. And that's because Damon here, thought it would be fun to introduce me as one. He enjoys starting rumors. And all because I just happen to always carry guns on my person." I shook my head.

"She's actually just a regular ole bounty hunter." Said Damon.

"Whoa." Jeremy.

"Stop lying on me Damon." I sighed. "I'm not a hunter, nor a vampire, nor a bounty hunter," Damon chuckled, "although I do know a good amount about some of the more obscure supernatural beings and occurrences. But, just keep that under your hat for now." I winked. "Now, about this wolf..." I trailed off, purposefully looking at Damon.

"Yes, the wolf, well, I was just bidding Jeremy a good-bye, and then you and I can dispatch of the wolf." He nodded to himself, moving to push Jeremy to the door again.

"That won't be necessary." I said. He stopped.

"What?"

"Jeremy can stay."

"Yes!" Jeremy fist pumped. Damon raised an eyebrow at me.

"Are you sure? I would think you'd be the last one to expose your precious ickle Jeremy to the gore that's about to happen up in there."

"That's were you're wrong."

"Awesome!" Jeremy said. I turned to him.
"Torturing innocent people isn't awesome. Honestly." I chastised. Turning back to Damon, I said, "Jeremy can stay because there will be no more wolf torturing. We'll do things the old fashioned way." I said, moving into the parlor where the wolf sat tied up.

"Torture is the old fashioned way." Groaned Damon, following me nevertheless.

"No, through polite conversation." I said, stopping to stand in front Mason. "Hello again Mason." I chirped.

"Thank God," he said, looking up at me, "you'll see reason. Please, convince your vampire to let me go." He pleaded.

"Of course, of course." I said, patting his cheek. "I just have to ask you a few question first. He'll get antsy if I just let you go without anything to show for it, you see. But, you will give me the truth, right?" I asked, staring him straight in the eye, cupping his chin so he couldn't move away.

"Of course." He said, blinking slowly, his eyes flashing between his human brown and his wolf gold.

"Perfect." I purred. Even if the human part of him wouldn't listen, the wolf would. It was more powerful than him, and it would defer to me. That's just the way things were.

"What's this 'your vampire' stuff?" Damon asked, throwing his hands up. "I am my own vampire, thank you very much."

"Dude," Jeremy said, "you're totally whipped."

"No I am not." Denied Damon.

"You were dead set on torturing him and kicking me out. Neither of these things are happening and your prisoner is now making goo-goo eyes at Gemma. You are totally her bitch. It looks like Mason is too..."
"He's not making goo-goo eyes at me." I denied, stroking his hair. He was just deferring like a good boy and awaiting further instructions. He was just easier to manipulate when his wolf was close to the surface, and his wolf just happened to be out the closer I was. He probably really enjoyed the lucidity he had on the night of the full moon.

"I am not her bitch." Grumbled Damon, who then turned to look at me, shock quickly replacing his pouting. "Why are you petting him!" He yelled. I shrugged.

"He likes to be pet."

Jeremy made a whipping noise. I just rolled my eyes. Boys. Time to get this show on the road. I turned my attention back to the now docile Mason.

"Mason." I gently called his attention back to my eyes. "Why did you come back to Mystic Falls?"

"My brother, Richard, he died. I came back for the funeral. You know this." He sighed. I used both hands to smooth his hair behind his ears.

"Of course I do. Was there any other reason that you came back? I heard you were looking for something in Richard's house."

"Hmmm. Yeah." He said lazily. "I was looking for the moonstone."

"Okay." Jeremy said to Damon. "Is this real right now?" Motioning toward me and Mason.

"Are you compelling him right now?" Damon asked, incredulously.

"Of course not. Only vampires can use compulsion." I said vaguely.

"And why are you touching him so much?" He asked. He seemed extremely irritable.

"Wolves are very tactile creatures. He enjoys the touch, and I get more out of him this way." Mason's eyes were now closed and he was rubbing his cheek against my inner wrist. Damon
growled. What was with him? "Mason," I called out again, gold eyes locked on mine. "What's the moonstone look like?"

"It's a smooth, oval rock. Milky in color, kind of looks like a bar of soap. It's been passed down in my family for generations." He replied.

"And why do you want it?"

"To break the curse."


"Yeah, that's the one." Said Mason.

"You said the stone's been in your family for generations. Why are you just looking for the stone now?" I asked.

"Because I didn't know that it could break the curse until now. Until she told me all about it."

"Who's she?"

"Katherine." He said, dreamily. Ugh, the hold she had on him was both disgusting and awe inspiring. I exchanged a quick glance with a furious Damon.

"Does Katherine look like Elena Gilbert, by chance?" I asked, better safe than sorry. For all we knew, it could've been a different Katherine. Then there would be no reason to get all up in arms at the current moment.

"Exactly alike."

"And you do know she's a vampire right?"
"Yeah."

"But you're together..."

"Yeah."

"And you're okay with it?"

"Yeah."

"Okay...?" I was at a loss. I looked over to Damon and shrugged. "Care to take over?" I asked, hopefully. He walked over.

"I read about this Sun and Moon curse. It said that the moonstone has to be destroyed in some sort of arcane ritual. And depending on who does this ritual, a vampire or a werewolf, their respective curse will be broken."

"That's right."

"So you're telling me, that Katherine told you this, so you could break the curse of the moon?"

"Exactly."

"And why would a 500-year-old vampire help a werewolf break his curse when she could break the curse on herself?" The dreamy state Mason was in while he thought about Katherine sort of stuttered.

"Because she loves me." He responded, finally. Damon gave a bark of a laugh.

"That's rich. Take it from somebody who's known her much longer than you have. Katherine loves herself first and foremost. The only other person that she might even have an inkling of fond feelings for is my brother. See how you are nowhere even on that very short list of people she thinks about?" Mason shook his head.
"That's... not true." It's seemed like it was getting harder for him to defend Katherine. Excellent.

"Please, she strung me along for 150 years. I would know. Let me tell you a story. Years ago, there was a woman, let's just call her The Devil for simplicity's sake." I couldn't hold in a chuckle at that. "The Devil pit two brothers against each other, who then, fought to the death. And right before she was sentenced to her own death, she somehow evaded her sentence by charming the pants off of the naive son of a founding family. And that family was the Lockwood family." He finished dramatically.

"You're an excellent storyteller." Jeremy supplied. The sarcasm ran deep with this one.

"Thanks, I try," Said Damon. "So you see why I find it awfully suspicious that she just so happened to know all about this curse, and all about this moonstone that your family had since the founding of Mystic Falls. Don't you?"

"I-" Mason didn't even get to finish his thought before Damon interrupted him.

"How did you activate your curse?" At first I thought it was kind of a random question. But then I followed Damon's logic. He was a smart one alright.

"My friend was convinced that I had slept with his girlfriend. I didn't, of course, I had Katherine. But he kept instigating a fight, and wouldn't leave me alone. Then all the sudden I snapped, and he was dead on the concrete."

"Hmmm. That sound suspiciously like what happened at the carnival a few days ago. To Tyler." Mason's eyes narrowed, thinking back the occasion.

"It does." He acquiesced. "That kid was angling for a fight. He wouldn't back down, just like my own friend..." He was slowly but surely putting the information together.

"That's because, dear Mason, I compelled that kid to pick a fight with Tyler, and to not give up. Which seems like the exact same thing Katherine did to your friend. Except hers turned out exactly as planned."
"What!" He roared. "You...! That...!" He calmed himself. "This could all just be an elaborate set up to make me doubt Katherine. You don't really have any real proof."

I stepped in. "We could definitely get some if you'd like." I said, wheels turning in my mind.

"What did you have in mind?" Asked Damon, smiling roguishly.

"Nothing a little good acting can't achieve." I grinned back.

"Oh, I like the way you think." Said Damon as I untied Mason.

"Don't try anything." I warned him. "I just want to see your phone." He handed it to me without preamble. I opened it and scrolled down the recent calls list until I saw the listing 'K'. I turned the phone so Mason could see it. "This her?" I wanted to confirm. He nodded. I handed the phone to Damon. "Better make it believable. Everyone else, it better be as quiet as a grave, this is going on speaker."

Damon dialed the number and put it on speaker. It rang a few times before being picked up.

"Mason." A sultry voice picked up. It was like hearing Elena, but not. Weird. "Did you find the moonstone?" What an opening line, she could have at least said, 'I miss you' first.

"Sorry, wrong boytoy." Snarked Damon.

"Damon." The once warm voice hissed. "What have you done? Where is Mason?"

"Oh, well, his body's right here in front of me, but his heart's across the room. Sorry, I got a little carried away." He smirked. She let out a sound of annoyance before taking a deep breath.

"Well aren't you clever. You may think you've put a big bump in my plan, but I'll have you know that I have a Plan B, and a Plan C, and every letter after that. So what, you got rid of one mangy werewolf. I'll just have to make another then, huh?" And she hung up. Not a moment too soon because Mason let out a soul-breaking howl. I did the only thing I could do, pat his back.
"Well, that's some proof if I ever heard some." Damon said.

"Damon!" I chastised. "Now is not the time." I said, nodding towards a broken Mason. He just shrugged.

"What do we do now?" Jeremy asked.

"Well, Katherine thinks that Mason is dead. So we need to keep that illusion." I looked to Damon. "Send a text to Carol and Tyler saying that Mason's going out of town." I turned to Mason. "For the most part, you don't mind the company of other vampires, right?" He shook his head. "Good, because I have someone who owes me a favor or two. You can hide out with her until we take care of this Katherine problem. And don't worry, she looks nothing like Katherine, so no problems there."

"Wait, wait, what vampire do you know that owes you a debt? You said I was the first one you met."

"Yeah, and after I met you, I met more." I shrugged. Damon frowned.

"Someone's jealous." Jeremy sang lowly.

"Is that fine with you?" I asked Mason.

"I suppose, but who's going to look out for Tyler? I ended up telling him how to trigger the curse, and I bet Katherine's next plan is to get him to do so. Who'll protect him?"

"We can look out for him." I started.

"Hey, I didn't agree to anything." Yelled Damon. I stomped on his foot and he shut up though.

"And if somehow she gets around us and he turns, well then, I'll keep an eye on him then too."
"I don't know how I can thank you..." Mason said.

"Well, life debts seemed to be very popular currency these days." I hinted, noticing Damon's eyes narrowing on me.

"It would be fair." Mason contemplated. "This torture session was headed toward death before you showed up, and you've opened my eyes to Katherine's true intentions, and promised to help my nephew." He thought for a moment longer. "It's settled, I owe you a life debt." I smiled.

"Wait, wait, wait. What just happened here? What is a life-debt?"

"Well, young Gilbert, you just witnessed a binding contract between two supernatural creatures. Mason now owes Gemma a life debt, which means basically Gemma owns his ass until she releases him, or he returns the favor."

"Two supernatural creatures?" Jeremy wanted clarification.

"Yeah," I said, winking at him, "things aren't always what they seem. But back to the problem at hand, after Damon sends those texts, we need to get rid of that phone. I'll get you another phone so that we can stay in contact. I'll have to call my contact, she'll come when she comes and we'll smuggle you out of town under the cover of night. Yeah, that should work." I hummed, thinking about our plan.

"Do you fake deaths a lot?" Jeremy asked, not expecting an answer.

"Well, I faked my own several times, but it hasn't been until recently that I've gotten experience with others." I looked over at Jeremy. He seemed shocked. "Oh, you weren't asking that seriously." He shook his head. "Well, now that I've exposed more of myself than you all actually wanted to know, how about we get this show on the road?" I looked over to Damon. He shrugged, nonplussed at my admission. "Cool."
"Hey, so what are you up to?" Drawled a familiar voice through the phone speaker.

"Well," I started, "Like most normal people at this time of night, I am in my bed, trying to sleep." I answered, rolling my eyes even if he couldn't see the action."

"Well," he mocked, "clearly you weren't sleeping that well, seeing as how you answered the phone on the first ring."

"I answered on the first ring, Damon, because you are notorious at getting yourself in trouble at the most inconvenient times. Clearly, I wanted to be sure that wasn't the case this time."

"Yeah, yeah, make things up if you want Gem. I know the real reason for the speedy answer."

"And what, pray-tell, would that be?" I asked, humoring him.

"Like I said, you couldn't sleep well, and you were waiting for me to call you and invite you into my bed..." I gave a shocked snort. As if.

"Yeah right, Damon. I have my own cloud top mattress now. Top of the line, Swiss-made. You can take your obsolete mattress and keep it moving." I chuckled. Like I enjoyed snuggling up with that blue-eyed devil. I was perfectly happy in my bed. Alone...

"Gemma, Gemma, Gemma," He dragged out my name like it were molasses on his tongue. "No need to deny the attraction you feel for me. I get that the pretense was the mattress. But we're adults here. We can identify our real feelings."

"Oh Damon, you do not want to talk about real feelings with me, sir. Now why are you really calling?" I asked. I would not get caught up in his little mind games.
"Fine Gemma, I'm not too proud to say it." He said. "I miss snuggling with you."

"And the truth comes out." I crow. "We have now leveled up to...I believe the kids are calling it 'cuddle buddies.'"

"Yeah, yeah. Mock my exposed weakness for a warm bed. Just get your butt over here."

"No can do. You want to snuggle with this girl, you have to make an appointment." I grinned, messing with him was so fun.

"I see how it is, Gem. Get a little power and it goes straight to your head. Well, I know something that will make you want to come over as soon as possible."

"And what would that be?"

"Earlier today, we at the Salvatore Boarding House received an unwanted guest. One Katherine Pierce aka Katerina Petrova aka pain-in-my-ass, dropped by to harass the general populace, as well as steal the moonstone. Which we eventually got back into our possession. The only thing is, we know that she's working up a new plan. We don't know exactly what it is. And since I won't say anymore over the phone, I guess you're just going to have to come on over and talk to me about it." He then hung up. What an insufferable prat.

Well, he wasn't wrong. No matter how comfortable my new bed was, I wasn't exactly having the easiest time actually falling asleep. I guess it couldn't really hurt to pop over just to see how it is that I seem to miss all the important stuff that happened to the supernaturals in town.

I don't know if I was impressed or irritated that my literal 'popping' onto Damon's bed right beside him didn't make him flinch at all. He was laid out in the bed, shirtless, with his hands behind his head, looking at me with the smuggest expression ever.

Irritated it was then.

"Took you long enough." He said, not moving a muscle. I joined him, laying down on my stomach, turning my head to face him.
"Just tell me what's going on." I said. "But first, tell me how it is that I miss all these big things that happen, and you don't tell me about them until several hours later? That's what I want to know." I lifted up onto my elbow so I could stare down Damon.

"Hey now," he said, "I called you right after it happened. It's not my fault that you have to work for a living." He screwed his face up like the very thought of working disgusted him. Well... he was a rich kid at heart. Then again, I guess I was too.

"Listen bub, I'm older than you. I don't have to work. I do it to eat time, and so I'm not some suspicious young twenty-something that is a resident of the town, but has no obvious means of support." I eyed him pointedly.

"Hey, I am the very definition of a rich kid. I live off my late parents' many investments." He said as if letting me in on a very big secret. More like a joke. His eyebrows danced across his forehead. He was ridiculous.

"Yeah, yeah. As if I already didn't know it."

"But really, what's the point of immortality if you have to work all your...life?"

"Exactly, which is why, once all this blows over, we're going on vacation." I pointed out.

"That's right." He said, gaze softening.

"Anyway..." I trailed off.

"Right." He said, focusing back to the task at hand. "Katherine is planning something big, as we've known since Mason's death and the subsequent phone call. We know she needs the moonstone to break the curse, but apparently she needs a werewolf too. Which begs the question, what else does she need? Because she's not doing this for Mason, so the whole werewolf ingredient really throws me off." He lapsed into the thinking silence.

"I feel like we could also infer that she needs a vampire as well. I mean, she turned Caroline. And really, a witch. Seeing as how this curse didn't just come out of nowhere, it needed a witch to start
"Makes sense. But I really hate leaving this all to chance. I mean, there were all these books that mention the Curse of the Sun and the Moon, and the moonstone and doppelganger are integral items needed, but I would love something more concrete." 

"Wouldn't we all. Until then, we just need to keep an eye out on everyone in your little circle. Assuming that these are all the beings needed, we need to keep an eye on the witch, Tyler, all you vamps, even the humans, since they can be easily turned into vamps, in addition to the doppelganger." I said, sighing.

"This just got a lot more difficult." Damon said, finally turning toward me, searching my green eyes.

"Indeed it did."

"Hey Matt." Damon slid over toward the recently promoted busboy. Even though he was a minor, somehow the manager had gotten permission for him to serve alcoholic beverages now. Joy. Damon surreptitiously pulled a small bag of some sort of brown herb out of his pocket. Wolfsbane. "Do me a favor Matty-boy, put this," he jiggled the bag, "in her-" he pointed to an unfamiliar dirty blonde across the room - "drink."

"Why?" Matt sighed, clearly not interested in being a part of the supernatural power plays that were no doubt happening right now.

"Because I asked nicely." Damon said. Matt gave him an unimpressed look. "Just do it." Damon compelled him. That worked. Matt took the bag from him [slowly], the magic of compulsion winning out against his indifference to the sure to be nefarious plot. He slowly walked to the back before glancing once more at the woman. His target. We really needed to get that boy on vervain.

"Damon." I called him over to me.

"Oh Gemma, darling. I didn't even see you there. How's life?" He said, walking over. I gave him a flat look. He was aware of my presence just as much as I was aware of his.
"Why are you tricking Matt into doing your dirty work?" I asked, arms crossed.

"Because you definitely wouldn't have done it?" He said, opening his eyes wider to seem innocent. It didn't work.

"Damn straight." I harrumphed. "So why are you always trying to make enemies with people?" I asked.

"I'm trying to find out what she is, and possible eliminate an enemy."

"See, that where you're going about this the wrong way. She doesn't have to be an enemy. You could just start a civil conversation with her, say, 'Hey, I noticed that you're new in town and this particular town only attracts those of the supernatural persuasion, may I ask what you are?' To which she may or may not answer, but at least you wouldn't be starting out with poisoning attempts." I said, nodding to where Matt was now crossing the room to give her the spiked drink.

"Now see," Damon said distractedly, watching her, "that would never work."

"And why not?"

"Because I enjoy the dramatics too much." We watched as she lifted the glass to her lips, before slamming it down right before she took a sip and turning to face Damon, and by extension, me.

"Clearly." I said, finding another glass to polish, as the werewolf woman stalked out of the Grille, retribution in her eyes. "That's not going to make you any new friends."

"Who needs more friends when I have you?" He asked, rhetorically, as he followed the wolf out.

"Damn straight." I murmured, as the door shut behind him.

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I had finally been invited to one of the infamous Scooby Gang meetings. I guess Damon decided that calling me up after the fact to tell what happened that day was not the way to get on my good side. And it could also be the fact that I had been invited to the Founder's Masquerade Ball, and so
leaving me out of the loop this time was out of the question. I didn't receive the warmest reception though. Mostly due to Princess Elena.

"What is she doing here?" Elena asked. Doing a piss poor job at hiding her dislike of me.

"Careful, luv, your horns are showing." I said under my breath, making Damon huff a laugh and Stefan look even more constipated than usual. "Don't you worry your pretty little head about it, Elena." I said at normal volume. "I'm just here for moral support, and to know when to look away during the party when this plan starts." I plopped onto the couch and pulled out a magazine, opening it to the page I left on. After flipping a few pages, the silence became pressing and without looking up I waved my hand and said, "You guys can carry on with your planning. Don't mind me."

"Okay...well. Elena, I'm going to have to insist that you stay at home." Stefan started.

"But Stefan-" Elena whined.

"No buts, Elena. We know that Katherine is going to be there, having you there too is just asking for her to hurt you."

"Okay, Stefan." She sighed.

"Anyway," Bonnie intervened, clearly tired of their whine-fest, "I have the moonstone, and I will keep the moonstone on me. When I first get to the party, I'll set up the barrier spell on the room you guys choose. Okay? And that's all I'm helping you with."

"Yeah, yeah, witchy. We get it." Damon rolled his eyes. "You don't like us, and you aren't gonna go above and beyond helping us either." He sassed.

"Catch more flies with honey than vinegar." I whisper-sang, flipping another page in the look book. I could feel him roll his eyes again.

"So Katherine will definitely be there. Once she's spotted, I'll go to the room. Stefan, you are in charge of making sure there's no collateral damage in the ballroom before we trap her. Caroline, you are in charge of getting her up to the room."
"You guys, I don't think I can do it." Caroline said, voice wavering.

"And why not, Blondie?" Damon asked, a bit menacingly.

"She just, so scary. I mean really, she killed me." It was a valid fear.

"You're afraid of her killing you again then." I finally spoke up. All eyes were on me now.

"Well, yes." She said.

"You shouldn't be. I mean, you're already dead." Elena scoffed. "And I don't say that to be rude, but she already killed you. And if there's one thing that we do know about Katherine, she never does anything without a reason. So, yeah, if this plan doesn't work, she may stab you a few times, or snap your neck. You'll survive that, easy. But it's highly unlikely that she'll give you the final death. She turned you for a reason, and if it was just for you to gather information about Stefan and Elena's relationship, she could've done that while you were human." I turned pack to my magazine. "Don't worry about it. Just lie your little ass off for a few minutes, and then you're Katherine free for a lifetime." Caroline nodded in acceptance.

"Great!" Damon clapped his hands together. "Once you get Katherine to the room, you are then tasked with watching over Tyler. Don't want baby Lockwood wolfin' out on us."

"Okay." She said quietly, but resolved.

"Ric, you're in charge of making sure Elena here doesn't mess up anymore plans by popping up where she's not wanted."

"Movie night with Jenna is ready to go."

"And last but not least, Gemma..." He said, turning to me. I looked up at him, not impressed.

"If you could be a dear and cause a distraction if necessary." He grinned.
"As if. I'm too poised to make distractions."

"I'm sure you'll figure something out."

And he was right. I did figure something out. After all, if you’re going to a masquerade, you better dress to impress. And so I did. It was an all-black number that pooled to the floor with a slight train. It was boat-necked, showing off my long neck and delicate collarbones. The bodice was tight, and bedazzled with black gems that caught the light and kept it for themselves. The sleeves were fitted, long and sheer, speckled through with the same gems. All in all, it seemed quite conservative, until you saw the back, or rather, my back, as it was completely backless. And although the skirt was long, there was a slit on the left side that ran straight up to the top of my thigh. My feet were adorned with black stilettos that laced up to mid-calf. I piled my riotous curls expertly on top of my head, and finished the look with red lips and a laser cut mask.

After entering the Lockwood Mansion, I went straight to the bar. Company came not too long after.

"I asked for a distraction for everyone else, not for me." A familiar voice drifted into my ears.

"Well then, Damon, you should have specified exactly what you wanted. I'm not a mind reader you know." I smirked.

"Hm." He grunted absently while looking me up and down. I would deny it if anyone asked, but the fact that he couldn't seem to keep his eyes off of me filled me with something akin to satisfaction.

"Aren't you supposed to be on the lookout for a certain baby-faced villainess?" I asked lowly, taking a sip from my champagne.

"Indeed I am." He said, pointer finger rubbing his bottom lip in contemplation, finally managing to lift his eyes up to mine. "And what better place to search than on the dance floor." He held his hand out for me, eyes hopeful, that infernal smirk playing across his lips. I sighed, downing the rest of my drink, and placed my hand in his before he whisked me off amidst the other dancers.

We took quite a few turns around the dance floor, his warm hand cradling my own while his other rested low on my back. He held me close to his body as we swirled around the floor, his bright eyes sharp on the surroundings. I blamed the champagne for my sentimentality. It must have been much stronger than normal if I was buzzing this hard from the contact with Damon. All too soon...
I mean, after a perfectly reasonable amount of time, Damon deposited me back at the bar with a wink and a whispered "Showtime," before ascending the steps without anyone noticing but me. And I retrieved another glass of champagne and looked over the crowd, taking over his job of sentinel.

Everything seemed to be going to plan. Well, other than that first death Stefan took care of after the appearance of Katherine. Right in the middle of the ballroom, she did it. Snapped that poor girl's neck. But what was most fascinating was the fact that no one noticed. This guard job really did itself. I'd said it once and I'd say it again, but the complete apathy of the townspeople here was both appalling and amazing.

Time passed, and I didn't hear any screaming, and none of the party guests seemed suspicious at all. I even gave a wink and a wave to Caroline when she came down the steps and vanished into one of the back rooms. Yep, everything seemed to be going fine, that is until a harried looking Jeremy was seen running through one of the back hallways. I only saw him because I happened to be looking that way at the time, so our cover wasn't in danger of being blown. But it did beg the question, what in the bloody hell was going on?

Then several moments after that, a wide eyed Caroline hurried over to me, shock and fear plan on her face.

"Gemma, we have a big problem." She said, trying to pull me with her. I resisted.

"Blondie, Caroline." I corrected, she wasn't in the correct mindset for nicknames. "I'm on 'keep the masses oblivious' duty. I can't leave."

"But Gemma," her voice shook and she looked like she was about to break down. "This is a very serious problem."

"Okay, okay." I said, getting up. "Just hush now and take a deep breath, you don't want all that pretty makeup to go to waste, do you?" She shook her head and took a deep breath, steadying herself. As we walked to the back I surreptitiously cast a spell to hopefully keep all non-supernaturals corralled to the huge ballroom. "Now tell me what's going on."

"I was supposed to be watching out for Tyler's safety, right? And I thought I was doing a good job. Matt had been compelled at some point though and so he was antagonizing Tyler. I took care of him and thought that was it. But while my back was turned dealing with Matt, turns out Katherine had compelled someone else just in case Matt failed." At this point, she took at a deep breath and opened the door. I walked in behind her, shutting the door behind me quickly, eyes immediately drawn to the dead girl on the ground. Matt was knocked out on the couch and Tyler was running
his hands through his hair as he stared at the body.

"So..." I started, "did you bring me here to clean up the evidence, or brainstorm a cover story...?" Tyler's neck almost snapped with how fast he turned to look at me. Then to Caroline for an explanation.

"She's here to help." Caroline said.

"Is she like you?" He asked, looking at me warily. "Is she a-"

"No, she's a hunter." I rolled my eyes at that bit.

“Oh how I wish that rumor would die." I said under my breath, rolling my eyes. "So what's the plan?"

"I don't know." She wailed. "It was an accident, she fell and hit her head. That could work, right?" She looked at me beseechingly.

"Well. Yeah, it definitely wouldn't look good for either of you or your families, but you could go with that story. Or, I could just get rid of the body." They both looked shocked at my blunt admission. "Don't look at me that way, Blondie. People go missing in Mystic Falls all the time. A fact that you, young Lockwood will be finding out up close and personal."

"Is that a threat?" Tyler asked, eyes flashing yellow, chest puffing out.

"Whoa, whoa," I said, putting my hand up, he moved back, "it definitely sounded like one, yeah. But I was merely stating that now that you're firmly on Team Supernatural, you'll be noticing a lot of new things in this lovely town you call home."

The teenagers exchanged a look.

"So what's the verdict then?" I asked. "Tell your parents that you got drunk which led to the accidental death of this sweet young girl? Or leave, so I can get started cleaning up the mess?"
Later that night, after the rest of the plan was salvaged, the moonstone was reacquired; yet again, still not sure how it got lost in the first place, and Katherine's skank arse was on its way to rotting in the tomb, I followed Damon up to his room where we sat on his bed and discussed the evening.

"I still say you should've killed her as soon as the link was off of Elena." I offered.

"I totally agree. I want that bitch dead so bad." He frowned. "But Saint Stefanie decided to keep her around after hearing the bullshit coming out of those lying lips."

"What'd she say that was good enough to stop a stake to the heart?"

"Something about a big bad coming for Elena and her being the only one that knew how to avoid it."

"Well," I thought aloud, "she's probably not lying about the big bad, because really, being a doppelgänger is just asking for trouble. But getting any information from her is just like pulling teeth. And as slippery as she's been in the past, she'll find a way out of that tomb somehow. It's just better for everyone if she's dead." I shrugged as he looked at me.

"Gemma, as always, we are completely on the same page."

Chapter End Notes

Cut off kind of abruptly. I know. Well. The next chapter is a direct continuation of this chapter. It is rated M, for DeMMa sMut. Told you the M rating was coming. It's a rather short chapter, and you can skip it if you like because other than the very last few segments of conversation, it doesn't really advance the plot. Though if you take into account the fact that I just said Demma smut, you can probably figure out what major decision was made.
That...Just Happened

Chapter Summary

The smut is real.

It was supposed to be a brief kiss. Just a fleeting press of the lips. A comforting gesture from one friend to another. I can't say what came over me really. Damon was my friend, my best friend, and yes, he was extremely attractive, but my feelings for him didn't encompass that, did they? I mean, we flirted sometimes, only jokingly, and we cuddled a lot, because sleeping alone was the worst - we both agreed. But it was nothing more than a really close friendship. So when Damon stopped talking, and when his lips formed into that cute little pout that happens when he's thinking deeply about something, I kissed him softly, shortly. And when I pulled away, his eyes were wide with surprise. There was obviously a big disconnect in my brain. Why did I do that? He obviously didn't like me like that. It was plain and clear that he was just kidding around with me. All those times I ignored him as his eyes perused my body, well, he liked women! He'd do that to anyone he passed. This was going to be so awkward. Maybe I could blame it on the alcohol? Bollocks, I hadn't even been drinking that much.

"I'm so-" My apology was cut off by Damon's lips on mine. It was my turn to be surprised. While my kiss was soft and searching, his was aggressive and demanding. One of his warm hands cradled my jaw while the other tangled in the hair at my nape. It didn't take long for me to give in and give him complete control over this kiss. And he took it. His lips were soft yet firm against mine. His tongue mapped in inside of my mouth like he was Columbus going on his maiden voyage. He drank from my lips like he was a man dying from thirst. And then he pulled away, slowly, like it was painful to do so. Our lips separated, he kissed me again, and once more, then a third time before I opened the eyes I didn't remember shutting and was immediately pinned by his glowing blue eyes.

"Thank God you kissed me first, Gemma." He mumbled against my lips. I'm afraid my brain was still fried from his earlier actions, so the best I could muster up was the eloquent,

"Huh?" By now he had tilted my head back and was kissing and sucking along my jaw and neck. I vaguely thought about the safety of having a vampire gnawing at my neck, then quickly dismissed it, noting that if it was anything like the last time I gave him blood, we'd both be extremely satisfied. The rasp of his stubble and the smooth of his lips made all my nerve endings tingle, and made me want to get as close to him as possible. I tried to resist, but somehow I ended up straddling him with my hands tracing his abs over his shirt. They were lovely.

"You, Gemma," he said between kisses and nibbles, "have been an enigma from the very beginning." He made it to my clavicles, and was doing dangerous things to them. The hand splayed
across my back were nothing to scoff at either.

"How do you mean?" I asked breathlessly. He pinned me with his sharp gaze.

"Don't play coy Ms. Doyle." He said, moving me so that his hardness pressed fully against the ache between my thighs. I couldn't keep the moan that resulted from that in, though I was able to congratulate myself for straddling him in the first place. Excellent idea. "We were both emotionally unavailable in the beginning, but you, you were mysterious, and beautiful, and so sarcastic. And you kept sending those flirty little glances at me."

"I did no such thing! You were flirting with me!" I cried, indignantly.

"Well," he said, "I can't deny that." He smirked. He was talking way too much. I ground against his thickness, making him hiss this time, while I pushed his face back toward my chest, silently telling him to get back to what he was doing. "I do love a woman who takes charge." He quipped. Before I knew it, he had ripped open my dress, gems flying everywhere, the remaining scraps of my bodice joining them on the ground. His hands smoothed over my shoulders, almost reverently, as his blue eyes stared into mine. His hand cupped my breasts as he kissed along the tops of them, sometimes nuzzling into the cleavage. I wanted him to stop teasing me. He grabbed my breasts roughly then and began talking again, kneading my flesh as he went.

"And then all those nights you spent in this bed, cuddled up against me," He kissed up to my ear, licking around the edge of it, "your tight ass against my cock," he whispered heatedly, "wiggling against me, pressing against me, trying to find that just... right... spot." He thrust up against me. "Well, you found it." I was so wet, gushing probably. I mean, all we had between us were his pants, the inadequate skirt of my dress and a scrap of lace the women at the boutique dared called panties. As it were, he could definitely feel my heat. Too bad he liked the sound of his own voice more. By this time my hips were rocking against his of their own accord. In a flash his lips were around a nipple. He suckled and scraped his blunt teeth around one as the fingers of his other hand rolled and tugged at my other. It was exquisite.

He moved us so that now my back was against the bed, with him hovering over me both hands doing wonderful things to my breasts and his tongue down my throat again. He pulled away to go back to my neck, this time his fangs were scoring it and I felt a trill of anticipation spread outwards from my center.

"You, Gemma, are too sexy for your own good, your blood is too delicious, you care way too much, and you're there all the time. Through Stefan's shit, Katherine, the tomb vamps, whatever, and can't help but to love you." He said, staring down at me warily, as if he was waiting for rejection. He'd never get that from me. I smiled a small smile.
"Damon," I said softly, cradling his face gently, "I love you too." My eyes hardened. "But if you don't take off your clothes and fuck me right now, I can't be held responsible for my actions." He grinned at me roughly.

"Such a dirty mouth." Damon looked almost scandalized. "But, it would be my pleasure." He pulled off his shirt and jacket, and I marveled in the way his muscles moved underneath his skin. A traced my hand up his stomach and over his pecs, feeling him shiver as I passed over his nipple. Lifting myself up, I targeted that same nipple, licking around it. He trembled and moaned softly, his hand playing in my recently let down hair. I sucked it hard between my lips, running my nails down his back. He almost whined, trembling even harder and detaching me from my new toy. I flopped back on the couch, arms above my head, displaying myself for him. "Naughty, naughty girl." He said, smoothing his hands down my waist. "What should I do with you?" He tugged down the remainder of my dress slowly. I thought I told him to hurry up?

"Shove me full of your cock?" I suggested, innocently. My skirt and underwear came off quickly then, leaving Damon in only unzipped slacks between my legs staring in awe at my pussy.

"Beautiful.." He said quietly. "And so wet." He stroked a finger into me a few times, then sucked it into his mouth, closing his eyes as he savored my taste. "Delicious." He said, finally. That was all well and good, but I wanted his cock and I wanted it now. He could play another time. I twisted us so that I was on top. With a little maneuvering, Damon's thick cock was out of his pants and his arms were held down at the wrist by me. I lowered myself down on his straining shaft, and with as wet as I was, his fat tip popped in easily, eliciting a loud moan from both of us.

"...So tight." He moaned, rolling his hips up, trying to get deeper into my heat. I moved up with him, foiling his plans. I was in charge now. His eyes snapped open and he pouted at me. Giving him a particularly vicious smile, I dropped down on his dick, taking him in down the root. I almost screamed in pleasure, I was so full. He growled loudly, fangs out and head thrown back. I licked a stripe up his exposed neck. "You're dangerous." He said, after catching his breath.

"And don't you forget it." I replied, starting to bounce up and down on his dick, which caused another round of moans.

"Let me go. Let me touch you." He pleaded, rolling his hips with mine. I agreed, releasing him, his hands went straight to my hips, guiding me down on him and making our connections more forceful. It was delicious. I brought my hands to my breasts, squeezing them and tugging at my nipples. When I opened my eyes I saw that he was no longer focused on the place of our union, but instead on my hands on my breasts. He stared and them hungrily. I leaned forward, offering them to him, and he latched on greedily, sucking on one tit then switching to the other, thrusting just as valiantly.
Eventually, I felt a coiling low in my stomach and I knew I was close. Based on the stuttering of his thrusts, I knew he was too.

"Damon..." I moaned out. "...Close." It seems my mind and mouth were at a disconnect seeing as how I couldn't form complete sentences.

"...nnnggh..." He groaned. "Just..." He broke off. Seemed the same was happening to to him.

All of the sudden, the coiling in my stomach came to a head, and released. The results were devastating. I was me. I was him. My body burned deliciously. The darkness behind my eyelids was filled with light. My heart sped up until in felt like it was going to burst through my chest. And when I came back to myself, it was to a gentle hand stroking up and down my spine and a very slow heartbeat under my ear.

"And Sleeping Beauty awakens." Drawled Damon, he sounded smug. I'd have to change that status. I slowly opened my eyes. It wasn't morning yet, if I really had fallen asleep, it wasn't for long.

"Shut up." I groused.

"I just have to say," he started, "in my long life, that has never happened."

"What are you talking about?" I asked sleepily, closing my eyes again.

"Never has a woman ever passed out on me... for reasons other than extreme blood loss." He amended. The smugness was coming back.

"Hmmm. So that's what happened. Well, you must've done something right." I said, stretching languidly. I couldn't even argue with his ego, I just felt too good.

"So, we're a couple now?" He asked.

"Seems that way. So you better not cheat on me, or else I'll cut off your dick and see how fast it regenerates."
"Wow. I never thought threats to cause bodily harm could be attractive. But, that's something you don't have to worry about. When I'm faithful, I'm faithful."

"Good, now shut up. It's been quite a while since my last roll in the hay and you wore me out." I feel asleep to him chuckling beneath me.
Waking up to find that I was sharing a bed with Damon was, in a word, familiar. It was the fact that we were both unclothed, and the both tiring and invigorating feeling of a night well spent, now that was different. Not unwelcome, just different. I was completely awake now though, no use staying in one spot, and as I stretched I could feel the delicious ache of our late night activities down to my bones. I turned to see if my bed partner was still asleep, and was caught in the unblinking focus of his icy blues.

"Damon. That is super creepy. You can't just stare at people like that." He seriously has a problem.

"Why not? You were asleep. I can stare at you as much as I want, and you wouldn't know because you'd be asleep." That's not how it works Damon.

"Was that really the route you wanted to take to try and justify being a creeper? Because I have to tell you, it truly isn't working in your favor."

"I'm just saying... I do what I want." I just had to roll my eyes at that. "So..." He started. Oh, here were go. "About last night."

"I hope you're not having any regrets, because I already ordered us a pair of his and her t-shirts." I said. He tried to suppress a grin.

"No. I was just...making sure you hadn't changed your mind. You know, heat the moment, making promises you may or may not keep." He shrugged nonchalantly, wrapping one of my curls around his finger. "That sort of thing."

"No Damon. I still promise to cut your dick off if you cheat on me." He chuckled.

"Damn. Light of day and that's still sexy. There must be something wrong with me."

"I'm not arguing with that. Now get up, and make me some breakfast. I'm refuse stay around just for the sex, I want good food and conversation too." I shoved at him to get out of bed, while burrowing myself deeper into the covers. Unfortunately he didn't fall out of bed, which was my goal, but stood up gracefully, and nakedly, raising an eyebrow when my gaze lingered, well, everywhere.
"I feel like you're undressing me with your eyes." He said coquettishly, walking around looking for some bottoms to put on. I couldn't help but to smile, even as it was hidden by the sheet.

"First of all, you're already naked. Secondly, you were asking for it." He gasped dramatically.

"Well I never." Finding a pajama set in the drawer, he put on the bottoms, then threw the top at my head. His supernaturally enhanced aim helped him in this endeavor, and by the time I removed it from my face, he had already left the room.

After donning the shirt that was so unceremoniously thrown at me, and finding my underwear surprisingly intact on the floor (amidst the remains of my tattered dress - we would be having words later) I walked to the bathroom to freshen up and try to do something with my hair. I tried. Nothing worked as usual, so I just made my way toward the kitchen toward my lover (I was not squealing in my mind, at all) and hopefully a huge cup of coffee.

There was coffee waiting for me on the island- bless his heart- and I ambled over in time to see Chef Damon flip a pancake from the skillet. He was wearing a kiss the cook apron over his bare chest, the cheeky thing.

"I give it an eight for sheer height, but the landing needed work." I judged after a healthy swallow of the scalding beverage.

"Day one of the relationship and she's already criticising me." He smirked. I hid a smile behind the rim of my mug.

"Well someone has to do it. Else you'd get a big head."

"I thought that was already the case." He leered. I almost spit out my drink. "You were screaming about it enough last night." He wiggled his eyebrows.

"Wow. I was speaking about your ego. But clearly we're past the point of no return. There's nothing to be done."
"You know you love my ego."

"It definitely makes things more interesting."

Then Stefan ran in, ruining our pre-breakfast sass-fest.

"Elena's missing." He said.

"This bitch..." I murmured under my breath before taking a much needed gulp of liquid gold. Damon sent another smirk my way before focusing on his brother.

"And when did this happen?" He asked.

"It had to have been last night some time. Jeremy thought she went home with me, I thought she went home with him, we didn't realize until this morning." He then finally took in the sight before him, and I could see him looking between Damon and I until something clicked. "Hey wait, did you two-"

"Shouldn't you be worrying about your missing girlfriend?" I drawled lazily. "Priorities Stefanie. I mean, for a girl who has a target on her back, you all sure lose track of her all too often."

We didn't get to have a nice quiet breakfast with just the two of us. In fact, it was rudely interrupted by the Save-Elena brigade, bunch of interlopers that they were. I found myself back on the couch, magazine on my lap, playing the part of disinterested third-party consultant. It was highly reminiscent of the planning session we had for the Founder's Party. I could hardly believe that session was only a few days ago, like I said things move fast in Mystic Falls. The only difference between this session and the last were the increased amount of heated glances between myself and Damon. Oh and Stefan too. He was trying to be discrete, but he just wasn't all that great at it.

The members of the group today consisted of Damon, Jeremy, Stefan, Bonnie and Alaric. Not quite sure where Caroline was, maybe she wasn't pertinent to finding Elena, but I did notice one person who totally should have been at the Rescue-Elena-Meeting: Jenna. The girl's aunt. And so, I brought attention to it.
"This may or may not be the best time to bring this up but, where does Jenna think Elena is right now?" I asked.

"With me." Stefen answered.

"Okay. And have you guys ever entertained the idea of maybe telling Jenna the truth about what's going on here?" I looked around. The faces of Jeremy and Alaric looked guilty, but resigned.

"Elena didn't want to worry her." Said Jeremy. This bitch, like I said.

"Well, there's clearly a supernatural issue in town, and there's most likely going to continue being an issue as long as there's a doppleganger around. Jenna, being the doppleganger's aunt, and in a relationship with a hunter," I gave Alaric a meaningful look, "she's kinda central to the problem. It puts her, and everyone around her at a pretty severe disadvantage. Now would be a great time to let her into the secret. While Elena's not around..."

"Elena's not around because she's been kidnapped, which we are gathered here to fix, not talk about who should be let into the secret!" Bonnie exploded. I put my hands up in a placating manner.

"Hey. I'm just saying." I went back to my magazine, but not before sending a "are you serious" look to Damon, to which he replied with a "I've been saying that all along" look. At least we were on the same page.

Bonnie was able to use a spell to track the whereabouts of Elena using Jeremy's blood, that in addition to a note she sent Elena, made her nose bleed. But clearly her health wasn't important in the face of Miss Elena's all too frequent kidnappings.

It was decided that Damon and Stefan would be the rescue party. Jeremy wanted to go as well, but that idea got shot down seeing as how they didn't know what they were walking into, and as much as I adore Jeremy, he just doesn't have any helpful skills yet. I approved the denial. But somehow, I got roped into going, at the behest of both Damon and Stefan, for very different reasons, I'm sure. Apparently, they needed a get-away driver. Yeah right.
"So..." Stefan started.

"Ahem.." He tried again.

"Stefan, if you don't spit it out so help me God. I was sure 162 would be old enough to learn how to start a conversation." I spat. Damon, who was driving us to the destination, lifted an eyebrow at me. I glared back. I didn't want to be here.

"I was just wondering how all this happened."

"All this? You have to be more specific brother dear." Damon replied.

"Well, you. And Gemma. I thought you were in firm friendship territory. Actually I though Gemma was ace because I never caught her so much as glance at you - or anyone - in desire even once, and come on we're Salvatores, it happens." Said Stefan. I could tell that Damon was amused by his younger brother's train of thought. Me, not so much. I held my tongue, but I couldn't stop my pout.

"Well, brother, you should have known that no one can resist me forever." It was my turn to raise an eyebrow at him. I hope I conveyed the 'watch-your-step' to him.

"Still it was a shock. You guys have been sleeping together for months, just sleeping. It was...honestly disturbing to me." Stefain said. I had had enough.

"You know what's disturbing to me? The fact to you were all up in our business listening to us sleep. Did you have nothing better to do Stefan, than to listen to what was going on in your big brother's bedroom? Elena wasn't interesting enough?" His cheeks turned shockingly red for an undead creature. "I don't hear anything Stefanie, your silence is deafening."

"Now, now kids. No need to fight." Damon interjected, and I could just see the edge of a smirk tucked into the corner of his stupid mouth. I wanted to slap it off of his face. And then kiss it back. Ugh. Relationships made me sappy.

"Why am I even here?"
"Stefan wanted to interrogate you - which he's terrible at, you're much better -" he winked at me "and I wanted to stare at your lovely face during this little roadtrip of ours." It took a lot out of me to suppress the dopey smile that wanted to take over my face when he said that.

"What you need to do, is stare at the road. And what Stefan needs to do, is focus on a plan to save his accident prone girlfriend." I crossed my arms to keep the giggles in.

"Did you have any ideas about saving Elena." Stefan asked. Oh, so he was being polite again, after basically admitting to being a Peeping Tom.

"No. And I'm not really inclined to try and help you think one up. I'm not too invested in her as a person." I shrugged at his shocked look.

"Why *are* you here?" He asked.

"For Damon." This time, I winked at Damon.

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"I'm sure you've heard of knocking in all your years alive." I drolled, apparently scaring an unknown vampire that had wandered in the boardinghouse. I was in the library, reading a book as I waited for Damon to grace me with his presence. Based on this vampire's looks, I decided she must be Rose, one of the vamps that kidnapped Elena. The one that survived.

"Who are you?" She asked.

"I think the real question is who are you. I was invited, you were most definitely not." I lifted an eyebrow in a judgy manner. we participated in a stare down for while, I felt like I was about to win, when Damon finally showed. He saw me, and saw her, and immediately sped off to pin her to a wall. My hero - note the sarcasm.

"You better have a good reason for following us." He growled.
"Please, please, I can be useful." She begged. He looked at me for my thoughts. I shrugged, might as well hear what she had to say. He let her go.

A short while later, we were all gathered in the family room of the boarding house, while Rose-Marie told us the story of her life, leading up to, and afterwards, meeting Katherine and her fucking a good thing up. Hmmm. Sounds familiar. Caroline, bless her soul, brought me a new magazine, and I maintained my bitchy, nonchalant behavior as I flipped through page after page and listen to Rose wax poetic about this Klaus guy. He didn't sound so tough to me, she was kinda wimpy.
"I thought we were going out to get coffee?" I said to Damon, and while he did come through with the coffee, we got it to go, and then he lead me to some random guy's apartment where Rose-Marie and Elena of all people were hanging out. I thought we were on a date. Silly me.

"We did get coffee." He lifted a brow and gestured to my grande latte, still piping hot in its fancy logoed paper cup.

"You know this doesn't count. I like to sit and savor my coffee, while I plot all the ways I can take over the world. You know this. It's a process that can't be rushed nor altered." Elena just looked at me strangely. Like I cared.

"Honey-buns." Damon started, guiding me over to a couch to sit on. "I know this isn't what you were expecting when I asked you out this morning, but I got a crazy call a little bit ago from Rose-"

"Rose! You promised you wouldn't say anything." Elena exclaimed, looking shocked by the betrayal. I don't know why, since this was the same vampire that had her kidnapped. Rose just shrugged.

"-telling me that our good friend Elena here, was trying to hand herself over to Klaus." Damon continued. "And I knew that you, being the kind-hearted person that you are-"

"-not really-" I interjected. Where the fuck did he get that crazy idea?

"-would have wanted us to stop by and save her from her bad life choices." Damon finished up. All I could do was just take a sip of my drink and shake my head at his delusions.

"You're Damon Salvatore!" Piped up a voice from... beside me on the couch, great. How did I not see her there? This is what happens when my coffee time gets rushed. Damon just gave her a "do I know you?" look.

"Rose-Marie, who is this..girl here?" I asked, because it seems like she was in the wrong place at
"This is Alice, she was Slater's girlfriend. She knows basically everything he knew." Ah, Slater. Damon told me all about how he and Rose went off to find him and see if he had anymore relevant information on the Originals. Apparently, he was this big-shot supernatural researcher, who knew way more than he needed to.

"Ah." I replied. "And where is this Slater at now?" I asked, unfortunately spurring on apparently another round of tears from this girl Alice. I scooted further away from her on the couch we shared. I was not trying to catch any of that.

"He's dead." Rose said.

"How unfortunate." Damon said, "Fortunately for us though, we're leaving." He went to grab Elena. "Let's go."

"No!" Elena yelled, and tried to resist Damon's strength. "I'm not going anywhere! I'm waiting for Klaus to come get me. I won't let anyone else die for me." It was amazing to me how she could be so selfish and martyr-ish at the same time. Truly mind-boggling. Really.

"Okay. See, this is why you're not allowed to make decisions when we plan things out. Because you make the wrong decisions. Grab your stuff, say good-bye to your new friend, we're leaving." I just sipped at my coffee. This was getting too interesting. I kind of forgave Damon for changing up the itinerary of our date. Then she went to slap him, and had it landed, she and I would've had some problems. But Damon stopped her hand mid-swing. "I will break your arm if you every try that again. We're leaving." Oh. That shouldn't have been so hot. Damon turned to give me a smoldering gaze and a wink.

"Did I say that aloud?" I asked. Rose nodded. I shrugged. "Whatever, it was the truth." I took another sip.

"It's too late." Rose said. "Alice already contacted Klaus' people."

"Yikes." I said, standing up. "That sounds like an Alice problem. Let's get going. I'm not in the mood to fight any Originals today, maybe later." I started moving towards the door, until it was broken down right in front of me. Excellent timing, as always. Two quite large and unfriendly looking blokes stood blocking the entrance. Since I couldn't exactly go anywhere, or even move...
away without drawing a shitload of attention to myself, I stayed where I was sipping at my coffee and fuming silently, just stewing in my hatred for all things Elena. I felt Damon move to hover behind me, his hand around my waist in case he had to move me suddenly. Super speed I did not have.

"We're here for the doppelgänger." Brute Number One said. Clearly. I rolled my eyes.

"Don't you dare, Elena." Damon muttered under his breath, glare focused on the lady of the hour.

"I'm here, and I'm ready to go with you willingly." She started to walk toward the strange vampires. I could feel the minuscule hope I had for her self-preservation breaking into tiny, little pieces. Damon decided to intervene.

"No you're not." He said, then he attacked Brute Number Two, who happened to be closest to us. Now, I'm not a fan of Elena. And these people were here for her. But I also wasn't a little bitch, and I definitely wasn't about to let my boyfriend be bested by these goons that we didn't have any intel on. And as it seemed like Rose-Marie wasn't going to be any help, and clearly neither was Elena or awed-Alice, I had to step up to the plate. I was very upset at what I was going to have to do. I didn't bring any weapons, Damon said we were going out to coffee. I didn't realized I needed to be armed for that. I know better now. And I wasn't about to manifest any weapons out of thin air because I neither liked nor trusted Elena nor Rose-Marie. So all I had was my coffee. My poor, poor coffee. It would never live up to it's full potential. The coffee was still hot. I made it hotter. Seriously. Hot enough to burn and damage a full grown vampire. And then I lifted the lid, and threw it on Goon Number One's face. He howled in pain. I bared my own silently.

"What is going on here?" A new voice interjected, making everything freeze. It was cool and crisp, regal and cultured. And the body and face it was attached to was nothing to sneeze at either. God, I even shivered a little. Which of course Damon decided to notice, even though he was across the room at the moment, in the middle of beating someone up. Whatever. I'm in a relationship, not dead nor blind.

"We came to gather the doppelganger for you. For Klaus." One of the first strangers said.

"And does anyone else know you're here?" The suited stranger asked.

"No. No one."
"Well then, you've been very helpful." And with that, he plucked both of their hearts through their chests easy as you please, gave everyone in the room a look, then disappeared.

"Well damn. Someone knows how to make an entrance." I said, tapping my lower lip in thought. I was thoroughly impressed.

"What?!" Damon exclaimed. "He's supposed to be dead!" Alright, let's see, who has Damon killed recently? Who was also a vampire? Well then...

"That wouldn't have happened to be Elijah? Was it?"

"And what the hell were those googly eyes for Gemma?" Shit, he did see that. I grimaced. "Yeah, I saw that. He is the enemy. And if you care to remember, you already have a boyfriend." He gestured to himself.

"Yes, yes." I waved him off. "I already have a boyfriend. He's great. He also owes me more coffee," I gestured to my empty cup, and to the remnants of it on the dead thug's face, "and an actual date, while we're on the topic. Okay but, seriously, did you see how he just ripped out their hearts though?" I directed that line of questioning to Rose. "Rose-Marie, you can't say that that, paired with that suit, it was not even just the slightest bit intriguing." I grinned at her and lifted an eyebrow, goading her on.

"He's always been very dashing." She agreed, smiling. I just nodded with her.

"Hello! I am standing right here. Your boyfriend." Damon exclaimed.

"Yes you are, you look very lovely, as always." I cooed.

"I can't believe this." He murmured to himself. "I kill the guy, and he just comes back to life, saves the day, and makes eyes at my girl. I can rip hearts out too, you know."

"Damon, babe, I believe you. But, you know, I've just never seen it. And he did it with class. I didn't see a spot of blood on his extremely well-tailored suit when he was finished. You have to admit, you're kind of messy with murder." I told him skeptically.
"She's not wrong." Elena murmured.

"This... is not happening right now." He grabbed my hand. "Come on, we're all leaving." He pretty much dragged me out the door. I could practically smell the jealousy on him. I hid a smirk behind his back. Someone was going to be working very hard to prove their worth tonight, and it wasn't going to be me.

That being said, Elijah was pretty sexy.

Chapter End Notes

Hahaha! Gemma, why are you so mean to Damon? Girl, messing with him for her own kicks. I couldn't help myself, she wrote herself in this chapter. Though it was a little of me in there because I did not get to have my coffee fix this morning before work. :( So, a shorter chapter than you're probably used to, but maybe with shorter chapters I can update more often? Well, we'll see if the muse strikes. Review please!

End Notes

Okay. So Gemma's on her way to Mystic Falls. I'm starting this at Season One. This will be Demma, but I'm gonna start them out as friends. Because you know that Damon's obsessed with Katherine all season. Just to be clear, there will not be any Delena. Just some of the normal one-sided Datherine. So what did you think? Who of the Mystic Falls gang should she meet first? Let me know.

Oh and PS. That flashback is courtesy of The Sweet Far Thing by Libba Bray, p. 773-776. I changed some of the tenses to make it fit as a flashback.

Ren!

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